

1999

# Crossing Over: an Oral History of the Desegregation Experience of Public School Personnel in East Baton Rouge Parish, Louisiana.

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**CROSSING OVER: AN ORAL HISTORY OF THE DESEGREGATION  
EXPERIENCE OF PUBLIC SCHOOL PERSONNEL IN EAST BATON ROUGE  
PARISH LOUISIANA**

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
Louisiana State University and  
Agricultural and Mechanical College  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Doctor in Philosophy

in

The Department of Educational Leadership, Research and Counseling

by

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August 1999



**UMI Number: 9945711**

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## **Acknowledgments**

Many people provided assistance, guidance, and support throughout the dissertation process. I would like to thank my committee: Dr. Petra Munro, Dr. Richard Fossey, Dr. Terry Geske, and Dr. James Bolner for hours of advice and commentary along with an occasional prodding and word of encouragement. I would especially like to thank my chair, mentor, and thoughtful advisor Dr. Spencer Maxcy who patiently stayed with me as I at times wondered through this project. In addition, Dr. Chad Ellett and my father Dr. William Davis who provided much valuable advice and assistance in proof reading and commentary. Also essential to this work are the staff at the Louisiana State University Williams Center for Oral History, particularly Dr. Pamela Dean and Ms. Mary Hebert, who gave me both technical advice and advice on oral history in addition to lending me the equipment used in this study. This work is also dependent upon the people I interviewed who gave me their time and their trust to relate their stories: Robert Aertker, Helen Haw, John Gerbrecht, Joyce Robinson, Freddie Millican and Donald Hoover. Finally, I would like to thank my patient family and mother Polly Davis who have supported me throughout, especially my wonderful wife, Melanie Crane Davis, who without none of this would have been possible.

## Preface

*"The story teller makes no choice, soon you will not hear his voice, his job is to shed light and not to master"* Robert Hunter

The words of the lyricist Robert Hunter (1978) seem particularly relevant as I introduce my dissertation on the topic of public school desegregation in East Baton Rouge Parish, Louisiana. I am attempting to tell a story; therefore, I am a story teller. But now, as I begin, there are more questions; always more questions. What remains to be said about desegregation in the United States that has not been said in hundreds of books and thousands of articles? Can we not review this literature, do a meta-analysis, reach a consensus, and bring this chapter in the history of American education to a close? As we enter a new millennium, is our past experience with racial integration in public schools relevant? Can we acquire something useful? Will finding meaning from the past inform our current practice? I would be naive, or perhaps presumptuous, to attempt definitive answers for these questions now or at the conclusion of this work. Yet, in some form, these types of answers are exactly what I am attempting to find. I am answering these questions, however, in an attempt to shed light rather than to master.

I believe that it is appropriate to say at this point, at the beginning, that school desegregation is fundamentally about race, or even more poignantly, about racial difference expressed in and through culture and society. For without racial/cultural difference, the topic of desegregation would have no meaning. Issues of racial/cultural difference make people uncomfortable today. Difference, after all, is part of what we do

not know, do not understand, do not control, and do not create. Mystery is always found in difference. And, through all efforts to the contrary, mystery remains, never far removed from the terrifying mystery of our own existence and the contemplation of death and non-existence.

Education through knowledge confronts difference as it confronts mystery. Education recoils from mystery and has become the business of knowing that we know in a collective and individual sense. Thus, we define, label, theorize, identify, standardize, quantify, and objectify our knowledge in order that we may know. Culture is often defined as that which is learned; if so, then we may never know beyond our own individual/collective cultural embeddedness. Of course, as we experience life, we may experience, appreciate, and assimilate characteristics from a variety of cultural heritages, even those of different cultural groups. In the end, however, one's experiences are given meaning through culturally situated knowledge. As such, one's thoughts are a reflection of his or her race, class, gender, family, neighborhood and community. As such, it can be said, that all thinking is both experientially and culturally situated.

How does one then speak to, or write about, racial difference and racial conflict? There is something of a dilemma here, an antinomy. If knowledge is the removal of mystery and knowledge is that which is understood, controlled, or even more accurately, created, then the knowledge of difference becomes our creation. We know there is difference; yet, all we can say is, "They are not like me." However, what is known, culturally, by a person is the only referent available to describe what is

culturally different. And it is exactly because, "They are not like me," that what they are remains unavailable, mysterious, and from the voice of the different person, ultimately limited by difference itself.

Two important questions need to be considered at this point. First, what is the form of knowledge being created, revealed or discovered with this project? The second question is why this type of historical study is to be conducted through the previously mentioned assumptions? In response to the first question, there is the desire for this project to conduct a historical examination of the general topic of race and society and its past and current impact on the public education of children. For the second question, the reason is to keep thinking about an issue that needs to be continually rethought, hopefully in new and productive forms.

With the goal of thinking about race in society, our society, what is it about public school desegregation in East Baton Rouge Parish, Louisiana, that needs to be thought, or rethought? In reference to a similar topic of race and difference, Jacques Derrida (1995), wrote on Martin Heidegger's involvement in the German Nazi Party in his essay, "Heidegger, the Philosopher's Hell" (1995). Derrida maintains that historical understanding of Nazism is and will always remain an unfinished project. Derrida believes there is a responsibility to meaning. Meaning is never finished, and Derrida (1995) warns of the dangers of assuming or declaring final judgment or determination:

Because I believe in the necessity of exposing, limitlessly if possible, the profound adherence of the Heideggerian text (writings and acts) to the possibility and the reality of all Nazisms, because I believe this abysmal monstrosity should not be classified according to well-known and finally

reassuring schemas, I find certain maneuvers to be at the same time both ludicrous and alarming. (p. 186)

It is my assertion that there are similar dangers of assuming or declaring a final judgment or determination on issues of race and school desegregation in the United States.

With this in mind and a focus on a specific event in American educational history, I am attempting to explore the narratives of individuals who, during the court ordered desegregation of East Baton Rouge Publish Schools, lived the experience of desegregation through their professional lives. Many of these narratives are from people who entered schools that the previous school year had faculties and administrations that were entirely another race and student populations that were predominantly another race. These teachers are known as cross-over teachers. Surely, new possibilities await to be revealed and discovered in the narratives of school personnel and the cultural and historical contexts of their narratives. And, I agree with Derrida (1995) that it would be an "abysmal monstrosity" to reduce these narratives "to well known and finally reassuring schemas."

It is in this spirit that this dissertation is begun. I believe there is a responsibility to meaning that always allows for what remains to come. This project is undertaken with the belief that the story of desegregation, and more broadly the story of race in America, is and will remain an unfinished project. Desegregation, as a story of conflicting values, is a story that in the deepest sense gets at the heart of what

democratic public education is in the United States. The richness of the narratives reveals this time and time again throughout this work.

The goal here is not to pin down, argue theoretical explanations, or reach some final judgment. Nor is the purpose to place blame, make judgments, or engage in historical revisionism. My desire is to do a narrative history, listen to the voices of others, and search for meanings in their stories. There will be no claims made that these are the "only" stories, the "true" stories, or even the "accurate" stories. After all, these stories will be told from oral narrative, and memory is often suspect. The narratives are no more or less legitimate than that of this author's or the readers'. There is a confrontation with the unknown beginning here through the voices of other people that endeavors to be educational without assuming the ability to fully understand their words or meanings. The focus is on confronting the unknown as an effort of understanding without assuming final judgement.

In her dissertation on the meaning of education in western cultures, Mary Elizabeth Quinn (1997) proclaims a confrontation with the unknown as the reason for education -- albeit, a reason that has long been forgotten and overlooked. Quinn describes a "faith of reason" as a guide for an engagement of education towards a life worth living; a life of love, value, meaning which extols the good, the virtuous and the worthwhile. Claiming that mystery will always remain, Quinn explores western civilization's attempts to overcome mystery with religion and reason, and the philosophical nihilism that ultimately resulted from the rigid epistemological frameworks bounding these efforts. In contrast, Quinn believes that reason may guide

us to an affirmation of mystery even though the use of and belief in reason is ultimately an act of faith. Therefore, it is through reason, or "faith of reason" that meaning may be found in mystery, or in life itself.

Thus, I begin my exploration of a sensitive time and a sensitive topic with recognition that mystery is part of the very racial and cultural differences that are being explored. I search for meaning and value for our current lives and practices in education from historical records and the experiences of a few educational professionals -- educators who lived through, were actors in, and creators of a dramatic period of change in one southern school district.



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## **Abstract**

The Fall of 1970 marked an important change in the East Baton Rouge Parish Public School System. In the previous 1969-70 school year, only three thousand out of twenty-three thousand African American children in the district attended school with White children. In 1970, the number rose to nearly nineteen thousand. In addition, for the first time, school personnel, busses, and extra curricular activities were desegregated. Over six-hundred teachers began the 1970 school year teaching in schools that were previously and predominantly another race. This event, known as the "cross-over," is the subject of this dissertation.

The historical study of the 1970 cross-over in East Baton Rouge focused on three questions: the perceptions of school personnel during the cross-over; the impact of the cross-over on classroom teaching; and community attitudes during the cross-over. These questions are answered through a combination of oral history interviews and an examination of historical documents.

Answers to each question are discussed in detail; however, a common theme emerged in all three answers. The phrase "deeply embedded racial attitudes and stereotypes" is used as a descriptor of the cross-over experience in East Baton Rouge. Deeply embedded racism is defined through a modification of Scheurich and Young's (1997) description of "civilizational racism." Scheurich and Young claim that racism exists, often unknowingly, in the construction of knowledge itself. This argument is expanded in this work with the claim that "civilizational racism" is present in the use of all language.

The conclusion of the dissertation argues that the oral narratives and the historical record demonstrate problems resulting from embedded racism, particularly through the use of language. It is further argued that "racism" is contrary to the common values that resulted in desegregation efforts in the first place. Because of the nature of "civilizational racism," people often do not realize that what they are saying or doing is racist. Embedded racism often affixes meaning beyond the awareness or intent of the speaker. As a result, it is recommended that school districts developing a desegregation policy also develop an "integration policy" specifically designed and targeted to issues of "deeply embedded racism."

# **Chapter One**

## **Desegregation Research and Theory**

### **Introduction**

This oral history explores the story of public school desegregation in East Baton Rouge Parish, Louisiana, from 1956 to 1970. As an oral history, this work utilizes the narratives of six individual educators employed during this time by the East Baton Rouge Public School System. Two questions are explored through this introduction: (1) Why is East Baton Rouge Public School System the subject of this study?; and (2) Why the years 1956 through 1970? The answers to these questions are explored throughout the first chapter; however, for the purposes of this introduction, brief answers are needed.

East Baton Rouge Parish was selected as the location for this study for four reasons. First, desegregation litigation in East Baton Rouge Parish began in 1956. The Clifford Eugene Davis, et al. v. East Baton Rouge Parish School Board (1961, 1967, 1978, 1980, 1981, 1983) [hereafter referred to as “Davis”] remains in litigation today. The current Superintendent of East Baton Rouge Public Schools, Gary Mathews believes it is the longest desegregation legal action in the nation (Mathews & Jarvis, 1997). Second, the large scale transfer of White teachers into Black schools and Black teachers into White schools in 1970, referred to in this dissertation as the “cross-over,” allows for the examination of a rapid change in school and classroom culture within one school district. Third, there are factors, discussed later, that make the public school desegregation experience in East Baton Rouge unique. Fourth, East Baton Rouge is a

large and important southern school district that was situated within a much larger desegregation effort in Louisiana, the South, and the rest of the nation; yet, no in depth study of early desegregation in Baton Rouge has been published.

The years 1956-1970 were selected because of the focus of this study on the 1970 cross-over. The 1970 school year was the year the East Baton Rouge Parish School System fully desegregated its faculty, extra curricular activities, and bussing; and the number of African-American students attending school with White students jumped from less than two-thousand to over eighteen thousand (Davis, 1974; Public Affairs Research Council, 1971). The history of the school district prior to 1970 is necessary to place the resulting discussion of the 1970 cross-over within its historical context. The year 1956 is selected as a starting point because it was the year that the Davis lawsuit was filed. There is some brief discussion of years prior to 1956 and following 1970; however, most of the focus on the East Baton Rouge Parish case is set between the two years. Finally, the extensive desegregation events in East Baton Rouge following 1970 are only touched on briefly. There is a need for a detailed study of the full history; however, this is not the purpose of this work.

It is assumed at the beginning of this work that the goals articulated in the original Davis lawsuit have not been realized. Further, the federal district court has established the criteria of a "unitary school system" prior to the closing of the Davis case. The school system has yet to end the involvement of the federal district court (Fossey, 1996b). In addition, Kennedy (1993) and Fossey (1996b) have documented the large amount of White flight, the failure to lower African-American dropout and

suspension rates, and the failure to improve test scores. Also, the Baton Rouge Morning Advocate reported that in 1996, twenty-four out of sixty-one elementary schools in the parish had over ninety percent African-American students ("Desegregation Status," 1996). Seven schools were one-hundred percent African-American.

Given the parameters set for the study and the evidence of the failure of East Baton Rouge school desegregation, three research questions are presented:

1. What were the perceptions of school personnel regarding the process of desegregation and the massive 1970 cross-over?
2. How did the school system's culture react to the changes resulting from desegregation and the 1970 cross-over in terms of learning and teaching?
3. What were the attitudes in the community of Baton Rouge towards the desegregation process and the 1970 cross-over?

To answer these questions, the following tasks were undertaken: (1) court cases, historical studies, and theoretical concepts related to desegregation were reviewed and analyzed; (2) a method of oral history including application of narrative theory was researched and applied to the specific needs of this study; (3) historical records related to public school desegregation in East Baton Rouge Parish from 1956-1970 were examined and organized; (4) the narratives of two cross-over teachers were collected, transcribed and interpreted; (5) the narratives of four school personnel were collected, transcribed and interpreted; and (6) conclusions were drawn and recommendations made. These six tasks correspond to the chapters of this study.

The first chapter reviews the literature on desegregation. This includes a review of actual desegregation accounts and theoretical or analytic methods used to assist the understanding of the meaning of desegregation. Some theoretical conceptions are necessary in order to understand some of the methods which have been used to explain similar social processes in the past. While none of the theoretical positions provide specific guidelines, they are used later as resources for interpreting, analyzing and discussing the individual teacher perspectives within the historical context.

Next, in the second chapter, the oral history methods used in this study are explained and discussed. Justification and explanation are provided for the collection of oral narratives from six East Baton Rouge educators. In addition, the use of narrative as a way to discover meaning is discussed in detail.

The third chapter is a historical examination of the desegregation story in East Baton Rouge and a description of the school and community culture during this period of rapid change. Chapter Three is a detailed history of the desegregation of East Baton Rouge Parish Schools from 1956 through the 1970 cross-over. Court documents, minutes from school board meetings, newspaper articles, and quotes from the six interviewees are used to tell the story of a remarkable sixteen years in the history of East Baton Rouge Parish. The purpose of this chapter is to provide a contextual setting for the oral narratives are presented in the next two chapters.

Chapter four presents the stories of two teachers who participated in the 1970 cross-over. The first teacher is an African American man who transferred to the then predominantly White Istrouma High School in the Fall of 1970. The second teacher is



a White woman who began her teaching career as a cross-over teacher at the predominantly African American Capitol High School. Large excerpts of both narratives are provided. The purpose is to provide a comparison of experiences and personal reflections on the same historical event.

The fifth chapter provides additional narratives to illustrate other perspectives and other points of view on the cross-over. Narratives from four educators who were working in the district are presented. The first is the Superintendent of East Baton Rouge Schools from 1965-1969. The second is a school librarian during the 1970 cross-over who was also her school's "Cross-Over Liaison." The third is a high school band teacher who taught in the school district for twenty-nine years and directed the All-Parish band during desegregation. The fourth is a former district science supervisor during the 1970 cross-over and a member of the biracial committee that developed the cross-over plan implemented in 1970.

The concluding chapter of uses the contextual history and the six oral history narratives to answer the research questions. Political, sociological, and anthropological theories presented in Chapter One are used to test the answers. It is also shown, however, that these theories do not clearly explain or provide meaning for much of the narrative. While each theory has some ability to explain various portions of the historical record and the narrative, much of the record does not fit established theory. Thus, narrative theory is used to discuss the historical meaning of desegregation and suggest new and useful ideas that further our understanding of processes of multi-cultural interactions in public school settings. Narrative theory, however, is different

from the political, social, and anthropological theories discussed. Narrative theory is a set of assumptions used in this study to guide the interpretation of oral transcripts.

Desegregation as a set of policy decisions is driven by a set of values. These values, clearly articulated in the decades long struggle prior to the end of legally segregated schools, include equality, freedom, justice, and even democracy itself (Kluger, 1980, p. ix). Given this, the driving purpose for using narrative theory for this type of study is that it allows research to be done with values on the surface. The oral historian, Paul Thompson in his book, The Voices of the Past (1988, p. 1) argues that all history is conducted for a social purpose. This argument is accepted here. The social purpose of this study is to investigate how the aforementioned values played out in one small piece of American public school desegregation history.

### **A Review of School Desegregation in America**

The purpose of this section is to review relevant and related events in public school desegregation in the United States. There is, perhaps, no other topic in recent educational history or policy on which so much has been written than the topic of school desegregation. This policy issue has dominated the educational policy arena over the past fifty years.

Given the amount of literature written on the topic, a complete review of all materials is beyond the scope of this dissertation. Literature reviewed here is included for three specific reasons. First, literature providing some type of historical description of desegregation is reviewed. Second, writings that include some analysis of the meaning of desegregation are described. Finally, literature that potentially provides

analytical tools that may assist in understanding the meanings of desegregation are discussed.

The first section begins with a discussion of a sample of the many writings on the national move toward desegregated schools. This is followed by descriptions and case studies of desegregation experiences in a sample of cities and districts nationwide. Next is a brief discussion of case studies of desegregation in the South. The purpose is to provide a regional context for the events in East Baton Rouge. This is followed by an examination of writings on Louisiana school desegregation.

The second section is focused on theoretical conceptions. Because of the historical and cultural significance of school desegregation, much research and commentary has been developed and articulated. Through a review of efforts to understand desegregation, many themes have emerged that set forth various interpretations of the meaning of school desegregation in the United States. Because the emphasis of this study on classroom culture and teacher perceptions and the theoretical assumptions necessary to do qualitative research, the range of theoretical models available is limited. Some form of subjective interpretation is necessary to understand social processes; therefore, many theoretical models have been applied to understanding school desegregation within a set of assumptions that allow for subjective interpretation and analysis. These theories have been developed in various disciplines including political science, anthropology, and sociology. These theories often are incomplete; they do, however, provide a set of lenses from which school desegregation may be viewed. In an effort to broaden the analytical focus, theoretical approaches to the

interpretation of oral narrative will provide an opportunity to go beyond the restrictive parameters of individual theories within specific disciplines.

A clarification in terms needs to be explained before the broader effort is discussed. The terms “school desegregation” and “school integration” are often used interchangeably; however, for the purpose of this dissertation, there is a distinct difference. “Integration” is a descriptive term applied to racial mixing that is reflective of an individual desire and choice to live and work with members from a different race or culture. Prior to the United States v. Jefferson County Board of Education (1967) [hereafter referred to as “Jefferson I”] decision, racial mixing in schools was based on the principle of “freedom of choice.” African American students were given the opportunity to attend White schools in their neighborhoods, if they wanted to. White students were not required to attend Black schools. Because of the voluntary nature of the “freedom of choice” plans, the term “integration” is often used to describe this period. The term “desegregation” is applied here to racial mixing in schools following the Jefferson I decision. With desegregation there were established quotas for racial mixing, and both Black and White students often were not given the choice of the school they attended.

### **National, Southern and Baton Rouge Desegregation**

#### **National Desegregation**

Legal public school segregation was institutionalized throughout the South following the Plessy v. Ferguson (1896) decision by the Supreme Court. In Plessy v. Ferguson, the Supreme Court held that public racial segregation was legal if services

provided by a state were equal (Tushnet, 1987, p. i). Little more than a decade later, in 1909, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored Peoples (NAACP) was founded to counter the growing trend of violence against Blacks around the country (Tushnet, p. 1). Early in its history, the NAACP established a legal redress committee to challenge legal segregation.

Using money provided by the American Fund for Public Service established by Charles Garland, "(F)rom 1925-1930 the NAACP gradually began to develop a plan for coordinating litigation..." (p. 2) to oppose segregation. This plan was partially in response to the Supreme Court's decision in Gong Lum v. Rice (1927). This case from Mississippi did not challenge separate but equal schools but rather whether a student of Chinese decent could be classified as "Colored." In its decision, however, the Supreme Court affirmed the rights of states to regulate the method of providing education including racial separation (Kluger, 1980, p. 120).

In addition to Supreme Court decisions that continued to uphold the doctrine of "separate but equal" like Gong Lum v. Rice, the appointment of Charles Houston as Dean of the Howard University Law School in 1929 was instrumental to the NAACP in developing and implementing a coordinated legal attack against legal school segregation (Kluger, p. 125-154). Through coordinated efforts led by Houston and money from the Garland Fund, the NAACP decided on a strategy that would not challenge the legality of segregation itself, but rather attempt to prove that states failed to provide equal educational facilities (Kluger, p. 134). In 1935, after several attempts to end legal segregation in other public arenas, the NAACP filed its first case challenging legal

segregation in education (Murray v. Maryland, 1936). The young attorney representing the plaintiff on behalf of the NAACP was a recent graduate of the Howard Law School named Thurgood Marshall (Kluger, 1980, pp. 173-190).

The Murray v. Maryland (1936) case involved the denial of admission to the University of Maryland Law School of a Black man under the "separate but equal" doctrine. Maryland, however, refused to admit Black students to their state supported law schools and there were no law schools for Black people. Therefore, the NAACP argued, the state was in violation of the "separate but equal" provision. In 1936, the Maryland Court of Appeals affirmed a lower court's decision and gave the NAACP its first victory in school segregation case (Tushnet, 1987, pp. 56-57). The University of Maryland Law School was forced to admit Donald Murray, a Black man..

Following the success of Thurgood Marshall in Maryland, several southern states began offering "scholarships" to allow Black students the opportunity to obtain professional degrees in other states (Tushnet, 1987, p. 71). The NAACP challenged this practice in 1937 when Lloyd Gaines, a Black man, was offered a scholarship to attend law school in another state rather than be admitted to the state's only public law school. The scholarship, however, did not cover any of the extra living expenses needed by Gaines to attend school in another state thus resulting in a hardship. The case reached the Supreme Court and the court ruled in Missouri ex rel. Gaines v. Canada (1938) that the Missouri's failure to provide a law school for Black's was a denial of equal protection. The state responded by appropriating \$200,000 for the establishment of a Black law school at Lincoln University in 1939 (Tushnet, pp. 70-77).

The NAACP's legal challenge to the doctrine of "separate but equal" as a response to the lack of professional educational opportunities available to Blacks in many southern states was not the only strategy employed by this group during the 1930's. Another area of inequality the NAACP sought to challenge was salaries between Black and White teachers. Thurgood Marshal decided to test the issue of salary differences in Norfolk, Virginia where not one of ninety-one Black teachers received as much pay as the 243 White teachers in the school district (Kluger, 1980, p. 215). Marshall filed a lawsuit on behalf of the Black teachers in the name of Melvin O. Alston whose salary was twenty percent less than White teachers with the same responsibilities and experience. The federal court in Virginia ruled against Alston claiming that he had knowingly entered the contract. Marshal appealed to the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals. The Fourth Circuit ruled in favor of the plaintiff's in the Alston v. School Board of City of Norfolk (1940) and the United States Supreme Court refused to hear the case. Thus, the Alston case gave Black teachers across the country ability to sue for equal wages (Kluger, pp. 214-217).

Through the 1940's, the NAACP continued to challenge "separate but equal" targeting the lack of available professional preparation programs and salaries. Tushnet (1987) describes the limited success of these efforts:

The 1940's brought no major victories in university cases. Although there were victories in salary cases, they entailed analogous difficulties. School boards abandoned salary schedules that were overtly discriminatory, only to adopt schedules that reproduced discriminatory results by seeming to rely on nonracial factors; penetrating the facade of objective merit measures was almost as hard as demonstrating inequality in graduate programs. (p. 88)

The NAACP was attempting to challenge "separate but equal" on a case by case basis. Although there was progress, it was painfully slow. By 1950, the NAACP began to develop a strategy for a direct attack on segregation (Tushnet, p. 104).

The shift in strategy that for the NAACP was from efforts to equalize education under Plessy (1896) to a direct attack on segregation and the constitutionality of "separate put equal" (Tushnet, 1987). A group of Black students in Farmville, Virginia staged a strike in 1951 and refused to attend class in protest of the unequal facilities in Prince Edward County (Kluger, 1980, pp. 451-479). The resulting legal action of Davis v. County School Board of Prince Edward County (1952) marked the development of the strategy of using sociological research to support the argument that racial separation is inherently unequal. Although the court ruled in favor of the defendants, the NAACP realized that in a different venue, similar arguments may prevail (Kluger, pp. 507-540).

The NAACP focused it's attention on a similar case in Topeka, Kansas. In Kansas, the NAACP achieved its greatest legal success and changed public education throughout the United States. Legal sanctioning of segregation in public schools throughout the United States ended on May 17, 1954, when the United States Supreme Court unanimously held in Brown v. Board of Education (1954) [hereafter referred to as "Brown I"] that racial separation in public schools was a violation of equal protection laws. The Brown I decision, and the Brown v. Board of Education, (1955) [hereafter referred to as "Brown II"] decision the following year, were landmark events in the educational history of the United States. Yet, these milestone events are only a part of a much larger struggle by African Americans and other minority groups to achieve basic



rights in the United States. Two factors make the Brown I and Brown II decisions significant in the educational context of the struggle for civil rights: first, the decisions mark the beginning of racial change for many school districts across the nation; and, second, the decisions provided constitutional support for those individuals seeking to end racial separation in tax supported schools.

The Brown I decision was a legal beginning that would later prove to have serious limitations. The court ruled ask the question: "Does segregation of children in public schools solely on the basis of race, even though the physical facilities and other 'tangible' factors may be equal, deprive the children of the minority group of equal educational opportunities?" (p. 493). The court ruled that school segregation does deny children of minority groups the equal educational opportunity required by law. Through this ruling, the Supreme Court prohibited state-imposed racial segregation of the students in public schools (Read, 1977). The Brown I decision left open the problem of implementation until the next court term.

On May 31, 1955, the Supreme Court unanimously issued the Brown II decision. The Supreme Court used this decision to instruct the federal district courts to take steps to end racial separation in public schools consistent with Brown I. The Court issued four guidelines to the lower courts: first, the court provided that local school authorities be given the primary responsibility for implementation of Brown I; second, it made the district courts responsible for determining if local school boards were acting in good faith; third, it gave notice that district courts must guide themselves by principles of equity while allowing for flexibility (as long as equal educational opportunity was not

compromised); and fourth, the court established the provision that local school authorities had to make a "prompt and reasonable start" and proceed with "all deliberate speed" in the movement toward integrated public schools (Read, 1977). Regardless of these seemingly clear instructions from the court, school districts across the nation, especially in the South, were able to delay implementation of the Brown (1954, 1955) rulings (Devore & Logdon, 1991; Baker, 1996).

The catalysts for change which set in motion actual desegregation were the Brown I & II decisions. It must be remembered, however, that the Brown I & II decisions were handed down within a context of much broader cultural changes. Throughout the country, the beginning of school desegregation efforts coincided with increased Black activism combined with aggressive judicial action (Ravitch, 1983; Kluger, 1980, pp. 700-747). As a result of both of these catalytic forces, the Brown I & II decisions have become symbolic of the many changes in racial attitudes and practices in American society during the civil rights era.

Brown I & II, albeit the most powerful and well known court cases on education and desegregation, represent only two of many historical efforts that moved schools and the general society toward greater desegregation (Ravitch, 1983). According to Butchart (1994), many African American scholars had begun writing about the origins of school segregation and advocating integration in the decade preceding the Brown I & II decisions. Three themes -- interracial cooperation, democratic ideals, and segregation -- developed from the work of these African American writers following World War II.

Butchart (1994) recounts the importance of the appeal to American democratic ideals during that time:

The appeal to moral prophesy and to interracial cooperation woven into the histories of the period were logical responses to the era. This was, after all, the heyday of the NAACP, the interracial commissions in dozens of cities and states, and other efforts to mute the racist legacy in America. European fascism had held a mirror close to the American face. Socialism was making headway in the former European colonies, in part by noting to the world's people of color how Blacks were treated in a leading capitalist democracy. White liberals began moving toward moderate reformism. That movement seemed to historians to offer greater promise of delivering a measure of justice than Black self-help. It was, at the same time, more congenial than issues of class, capital, and conflict, the themes Bond and DuBois had called upon their contemporaries to consider. (p. 96)

The thinking described here, bound in a tradition of progressivism, was that segregation should and would wither away.

To some extent, the liberal progressives were correct. During the decade preceding the Brown I & II decisions, a foundation of support had been created for change in American public education (Kluger, 1975, pp. 256-424). Beginning with Brown I & II, policy impacting the integration of public schools was developed and implemented on all levels of government (federal, state, and local) and all branches of government (executive, legislative, and judicial). Key milestones marked the culmination of these political efforts. At the federal level, the Supreme Court made racial segregation illegal with Brown I (Read, 1977; Ravitch, 1983). Federal courts further strengthened their position issuing dual decisions in Singleton v. Jackson Municipal Separate School District (1965, 1966) [hereafter referred to as "Singleton I & II"], and dual decisions in United States v. Jefferson County Board of Education (1966,

1967) [hereafter referred to as "Jefferson I & II"]. The Singleton I & II decisions required all branches of government to actively pursue desegregation of schools, and the Jefferson I & II decisions further mandated compulsory desegregation by rejecting all efforts of token integration (Read, 1977; Ravitch, 1983). It was, in fact, the Jefferson II decision that led to the use of cross-over teachers in 1970. In addition, Congress passed into law the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which gave statutory authority to desegregation efforts. Finally, under the Civil Rights Act of 1964, a federal agency, the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, was charged with enforcing the Civil Rights Act as well as other federal civil rights legislation (Rossell, 1983, pp. 14-16)

Contradictions in how public schools were desegregated were found in all regions of America. Along with federal actions to desegregate public schools, states contributed their own efforts. In the North and West, the state legislatures and the state courts often joined in desegregating urban public schools (Edwards & Wirt, 1967; Fort, 1967). As a case in point, Sacramento, California, was successfully desegregated through the actions of the California state legislature and the state's courts (Edwards & Wirt). Yet some cities, like Louisville, Kentucky, and San Antonio, Texas, implemented desegregation policies without any prompting by their state legislatures or courts (Fort, 1967).

In other regions of the country, especially the deep South, local leaders sought independence from state and federal intervention in order to maintain segregated schools. Here, state legislatures in states like Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama

parted company with the Federal Courts and took action to unilaterally block desegregation and compliance with Brown II (Ravitch, 1983; Read, 1977).

Regardless of where in the nation, or at what level, a policy decision on desegregation was developed; two distinct and powerful political forces emerged: those promoting desegregation and those resisting desegregation. Following the implementation of desegregation plans within school systems, these two countervailing forces remained active in both the external and internal environments of the institutions as they experienced the process of change (Ravitch, 1985).

Both northern and southern school systems struggled with the anomalous conditions their interests generated; yet, there were significant regional differences. Desegregation in the North and West was mostly an urban phenomenon with many small towns and communities completely unaffected by the desegregation policies being enforced. Many detailed case studies have been written about urban school desegregation in northern and western cities of Boston, Massachusetts (Glenn, 1996; Bullard, Grant, & Stoia, 1981), Hartford, Connecticut (Fossey, 1996a), Erie, Pennsylvania (Iutovich, & Clyburn, 1981), Wilmington, Delaware (Raffel, & Morstain, 1981; Schmidt, 1985; Darden, 1985), Milwaukee, Wisconsin (Mihelich, & Welch, 1981), Stockton, California (Muskal, & Treadwell, 1981), San Francisco, California (Fine, 1986), Berkeley, California (Freudenthal, 1967), and New York City (Landers, 1967).

Generally, these northern regions held relatively small percentages of minority members. Also, segregation in northern school districts was largely a result of tacit

demographic conditions resulting from economic discrimination manifesting itself in job and housing patterns (Wirt, 1967). Wirt labels the prevailing forms of school segregation in the North "de facto" segregation. Northern school districts often would gerrymander school attendance zones around racially divided housing patterns (Green, 1985). Further, large metropolitan areas in the North and West were usually composed of several districts. Generally an urban city center district would be composed mostly of minority students, while the surrounding suburbs would each have their own, mostly White, school districts (Pearce, 1985; Darden, 1985). Key issues in northern and western school desegregation were forced bussing to end "de facto" segregation and the ability of desegregation policy to transcend existing school district boundaries. Bussing policy was adopted under stipulations established by the Supreme Court's Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg (1970, 1971) decision (Gaillard, 1988). Bussing was later greatly restricted by the Milliken v. Bradley (1974) decision which greatly restricted lower courts' authority to order mandatory bussing across district lines. This ruling greatly modified most northern and western metropolitan school desegregation plans. Although most northern and western urban centers shared common issues of bussing, the South contended with a different, and often more complicated, set of cultural dynamics in school desegregation efforts.

### **School Desegregation in the South**

In the South, nearly all communities had to deal with the desegregation of their public schools. Here, racial numbers demanded changes. Most southern school districts had formally segregated schools legitimized by the "separate but equal"

doctrine established through the 1896 Plessy v. Ferguson decision (Ravitch, 1983). Supported by law, most southern school districts had policy mandates that prevented racially integrated public schools (Ravitch). In addition, there was a tendency in the South for one school district to represent entire metropolitan areas; or, as is the case of Louisiana, for one school district to serve an entire Parish. This type of segregation commonly found in the South is called "de jure" segregation (Wirt, 1967).

Many case studies of southern school desegregation have been published which document the varied experiences. Detailed examinations of school segregation in Charlotte, North Carolina (Gaillard, 1988), Richmond, Virginia (Sartain & Dennes, 1981; Pratt, 1992), Dallas, Texas (Albert, White & Geisel, 1981; Linden, 1995), New Orleans, Louisiana (Davore & Logsdon, 1991; Baker, 1996; Garvin, 1996), and Mobile, Alabama (Foley, 1981) have been published. These studies are all macro political and historical studies that chronicle a pattern of resistance followed by slow acceptance of change.

School segregation in the South was originally supported through Plessy v. Ferguson (1896), and the practice of legal segregation was well entrenched along with other racially discriminatory public policies inherited from slavery, the Civil War, and reconstruction. Thus, following the Brown I & II decisions, there was massive resistance and open defiance towards school desegregation. Following the failure of open defiance, southern districts often turned to evasive measures to preserve school segregation. First through token integration and later through the use of "freedom of choice" plans, African American students could legally attend White public schools;

however, many subtle and overt forms of intimidation were used to maintain segregation (Read, 1977; Ravitch, 1985).

### **Baton Rouge School Desegregation**

A thorough search for scholarship and other analysis from secondary sources on the desegregation of Baton Rouge schools reveals a shocking lack of published accounts. Several recent studies conducted by local scholars have begun to provide some analysis. Mathews and Jarvis (1997) provide a brief sketch of the historical developments related to the Davis case. In addition, Fossey (1996b) and Kennedy (1993) have done some research on the effects of Baton Rouge desegregation. Regardless, there are no detailed comprehensive accounts of the entire story.

East Baton Rouge Parish shares a common school desegregation history with the rest of the South. East Baton Rouge Parish schools were legally segregated through policy; and one school system, divided by race, serves the entire parish. Also, during the time Baton Rouge was desegregating its schools, the rest of the South was going through similar changes within their public schools. Like much of the South, there was inequality in terms of resources and quality between White and African-American schools in East Baton Rouge Parish (Public Affairs Research Council of Louisiana, 1969; Ravitch, 1983, p. 121; Simmons, 1985, pp. 66-71). The PAR of Louisiana (1969) reported that in the 1966-67 school year, the inventory value of school facilities per pupil, by race, in Baton Rouge Public Schools was \$1,303.74 for White schools and \$1,090.95 for African American schools.



Regardless of similarities with the rest of the South, specific cultural and historical factors within East Baton Rouge Parish make the story of school desegregation in the city unique. The role of the city as the state capital gave special symbolic significance to efforts of school desegregation for both pro and anti desegregation supporters. And the location in the city of a Federal District Court and two major universities drew additional attention to the process of school integration in the city. On the other hand, school integration was resisted because of the highly centralized economic base of the city and the influence on local government of large industrial corporations which valued stability over change. These forces maintained a centralized power base within the municipal government and the school board which sought to protect its own interests (Carleton, 1996). Baton Rouge was also the site of much Civil Rights activity and a strong African American community (Carrell, Carter, Goods, & Henry, 1996; Kluger, 1975, pp. 287-288). In many ways, Baton Rouge can be seen historically as the battleground of the most powerful forces for and against desegregation.

The Public Affairs Research Council of Louisiana provides clear documentation for the level of racial change resulting from the 1970 cross-over. PAR (1971) reported that little progress was made in school integration in East Baton Rouge through the 1968-69 academic year. During the 1968-69 school year, in East Baton Rouge, 91.6% of all White students were attending schools with less than ten percent African American membership, and ninety-one percent of all African American students were attending schools with less than ten percent White membership. More revealing is the

report during the same school year that seventy out of one-hundred-one schools in the district were less than one percent integrated.

Change began to accelerate rapidly during the next two years. Through the 1970-71 school year, 56.1% of all White students were attending schools with less than ten percent African American membership, and 66.3% of all Black students were attending schools with less than ten percent White membership. By 1970-71, thirty-eight out of one-hundred-two schools in the district were less than one percent integrated. One important fact gained from these figures is the indication of rapid and major change in the internal environment of the public schools in Baton Rouge during the 1970-71 school year. The goal of this research is to understand the perception, meaning, and impact of this change on classroom teachers. To succeed in this goal, some analytical tools are necessary.

### **Political, Anthropological and Sociological Conceptions of School Desegregation**

#### **Political Theoretical Perspectives**

School desegregation is often examined as a political process. Rossell (1997) calls the Brown decision "the very heart of the struggle to eliminate legalized discrimination in America" (p. 43). As such, Rossell argues it has become a powerful symbol in American political culture. In the South, there was massive resistance to efforts to end the system of legal segregation. In the North, where schools were not legally segregated, there was massive resistance to bussing plans designed to eliminate school segregation resulting from segregated housing patterns (Rossell, p. 47). Thus, the history of desegregation of schools is marked by efforts of the government to

achieve broad based social policies in the face of powerful local resistance to the details of the policy.

This led to failure. Rossell asserts: "In essence the history of school desegregation illustrates the limits of government and judicial policy" (p. 64). There is existing today, Rossell argues, a political culture that will allow desegregation to work without government mandates. Through the forty year experience of desegregation, Rossell claims that there have been remarkable social changes that will enable voluntary desegregation plans to be successful. According to Rossell, current efforts of voluntary desegregation are supported by these political conditions:

- (1) the overwhelming acceptance by whites of racial integration of the schools;
- (2) the overwhelming rejection by whites of "forced busing" to achieve this;
- (3) the public perception of continuing White flight from mandatory reassignment plans; and
- (4) the creation of magnet school plans that appear to provide an incentive for whites to act in accordance with both their self-interest and their support of integration. (p. 64)

This type of political interpretation of the meaning of desegregation has some theoretical support. Plank and Boyd (1994), explain the relationship between the school districts and their communities suggested by Rossell's thesis. These authors cite court involvement in education as an example of "antipolitical" policy development in the United States. "Antipolitics" marked a move away from local political solutions to school problems. Plank and Boyd argue that "antipolitical" policy development in school systems often causes individuals to withdraw their children and support from the school system:

Over the past four decades various plausible interpretations of the social contract and the public good have been systematically subverted by the refusal of large numbers of White parents in urban areas throughout the U.S. to send their children to school with Black children, despite the "authoritative" urging of judges and others. Given the opportunity to express their preferences, a majority of White voters has consistently opposed efforts to integrate schools or to equalize educational opportunities. When denied the opportunity to express their preferences at the ballot box, whites have "voted with their feet" to similar effect. Democratic government has thus far proven itself incapable of resolving this dilemma. (p. 271)

This, in theory, explains the phenomena of "White flight" described and documented by Rossell.

Rossell, in supporting magnet school programs, is tacitly acknowledging that democratic government may always be incapable of solving the desegregation dilemma. The only other alternative, "school choice", posited by Rossell, is also an "antipolitical" policy according to Plank and Boyd. In both court mandated plans and magnet school plans, policy decisions are taken away from locally elected officials. Unfortunately, the "antipolitics" of education resulting from either type of policy has led to an emphasis on form rather than on quality:

The two most striking features of American school politics over the past decade have been an obsessive concern with the multiple "failures" of the educational system and a propensity to embark on a flight from democracy in search for solutions. The consequence has been the growth of an *antipolitics* of education, in which disagreements about educational policy and practice are increasingly likely to be addressed in conflict over the institutions of education governance rather than in open debate on the merits of alternative goals and strategies. (p. 254)

The experience of Baton Rouge, with a long history of both court mandates and magnet type programs, seems to support the hypothesis of Plank and Boyd. Mathews and

Jarvis (1997) document a dramatic "White flight" and corresponding drop in community support of the Baton Rouge school system following the implementation of mandated court ordered desegregation plans. And, while the nature of disagreements has not yet been examined, the drop in school performance documented by Mathews and Jarvis does suggest that the system may have been focusing on issues of governance rather than on alternative goals and strategies.

These types of political theories do provide some explanation for the effects of desegregation policy, especially in documenting "White flight" and community response. The weakness in these models is a tendency to over-generalize human motivations. These models tend to document human responses to cultural conditions and then hypothesize about the cause. Efforts to document the intentions and perceptions of those actually involved usually entail generalized surveys rather than in-depth individual interviews. In addition, little emphasis is placed on cultural and social differences and the role these play in the desegregation process.

### **Anthropological Theoretical Perspectives**

Issues of school desegregation are further illuminated through theoretical perspectives originating from cultural anthropology. Prager, Longshore, and Seeman, (1986) comment that: "As we see it, the intense commitment in the past to studying desegregation has not produced a commensurate understanding of the problem" (p. 4). The reason for this, according to the authors, is that research has been guided largely by public concerns and issues. As a result, there has been an emphasis on effects of desegregation. In politically motivated debates, however, adversaries continue to

haggle over how to define effects and desegregation itself. The conclusion is reached that: "For the most part, social scientists have looked for the effects of desegregation (however defined) without linking those effects to underlying processes and without bringing relevant theoretical work to bear on the findings" (p. 6). These authors believe that "field theory" is a more appropriate method to understand desegregation because it seeks to describe the "situation as a whole" (p. 7).

Ogbu (1986) provides an excellent example of the use of "field theory" to interpret desegregation. Ogbu labels his work a "cultural-ecological" perspective. This conceptual framework studies desegregation from the participants' point of view. Emphasis is placed on the historical and structural forces that shape participant perception. Ogbu describes these perceptions as "folk epistemology" (p. 31). The ability of a school to be successful depends on the "folk epistemology" of the people in the school. Ogbu explains:

The folk epistemology of the people's perceptions and interpretations of how things work, especially how their society and its economic system work and how schooling fits into the scheme of things, is affected by several factors. Among them are the social organization of the society and how groups are situated within it, their historical experiences, their religious and other values, etc. Favorable perceptions of linkages between schooling and opportunities in the labor market usually lead to favorable perceptions of schooling and to the emergence of a folk model of schooling that promotes a strong pursuit of educational credentials in terms of effort investment. (p. 31)

When the connection is made between school and later success, then shared beliefs, values, and attitudes develop towards the role of schools.

Ogbu argues that because of historic discrimination and economic subordination of minority groups, "the epistemology of caste-like minorities is often characterized by a sense of collective institutional discrimination" (p. 34). As a result, race and school desegregation becomes important only when racial-group members are denied equal educational opportunities and rewards for educational accomplishments. Because of the sense of collective discrimination, the folk epistemology for many minority members perceives public schools as an institution controlled by White people. Ogbu describes this epistemology:

We suggest that the nature of the Black-school relationship may make it difficult for blacks to teach their children effectively and for the children to acquire the beliefs, values, and attitudes that support the educational system and its assumptions and practices. Specifically, it may make it difficult for the children to accept and internalize the schools' rules of behavior for achievement. Black children are also likely to be skeptical about what schools teach about American economic systems, especially the supporting beliefs, values, and attitudes. For these reasons, we need to know more about what kinds of cultural knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes they bring with them to school, their origins and their relation to current behavior. (p. 39)

There is a shift here away from the political institutional structures described by Rossell to the cultural perspectives of different groups and separate individuals.

Delpit's (1995, pp167-183) examination of clashes between school and home culture is an example of a type of "cultural-ecological" perspective. These cultural clashes are seen as a result of assumptions concerning minority children in schools (pp. 170-177). Some of the stereotypical assumptions are identified as "child-deficit belief" or the belief that less should be demanded of minority students because they are less capable; ignorance of community norms or failure to recognize and utilize the often rich

home lives and communities of students; and invisibility or the fear that recognition of racial or cultural difference will insult the child. Delpit's concerns suggest that a broader sociological view of the racial integration in school classrooms is needed.

These anthropological theories place a much greater emphasis on cultural differences and the impact these differences may have on policy. A weakness is that by emphasizing differences between cultures, there is little acknowledgment of individual difference within specific cultures. For example, Ogbu's analysis of the distrust of African Americans of public schools run by whites is certainly true to some extent. Nevertheless, it is uncertain whether all, most, some, or few African Americans actually hold these views.

### **Sociological Theoretical Perspectives**

One result of cultural and anthropological approaches to questions of race and desegregation in schools is the perception that individuals participating in a process of social change have culturally influenced experiences, intentions, and perceptions. Phenomenological methods have been used in sociology as an additional frame to understand desegregation that focuses on the perceived meaning of individual social action. Willie and Greenblatt (1981b) guided a series of studies sponsored through the Harvard Graduate School of Education of the process of desegregation in ten urban school systems using a phenomenological case study method. These studies focused on phenomenological factors which may be labeled external to individual school cultures. Emphasis is on the interaction between the schools and the community. The studies were macro in scope and did not focus on social interactions in the classroom.



Willie and Greenblatt (1981b) describe their use of phenomenology as a method in sociological case studies of ten school districts:

(W)e believe that the frame of reference of phenomenology is essential in the reconstruction and analysis of community organization and school desegregation in time and space. The phenomenological frame of reference enables the researcher to analyze complexes of characteristics rather than single variables. The analytical framework for any investigation should be chosen because it facilitates observation and understanding. (p. 19)

Later, Willie and Greenblatt separate human social systems from all other systems of existence. Willie and Greenblatt call for different approaches to understanding human life:

This analysis points toward fundamental differences in the nature and function of human social systems and other systems in our environment, and suggests the need for different conceptual approaches for the purposes of understanding the principles that govern interaction within human social systems. (pp. 19-20)

In this regard, phenomenology is seen as a theoretical perspective that drives a specific method to reach a specific type of conclusion. Utility is provided for the researcher through such a perspective by providing a specific lens for examining functioning of human social systems.

A key component of phenomenology is the idea of intentionality. Willie and Greenblatt (1981b) describe their focus on intentionality within their use of phenomenology as sociological theoretical perspective:

Social relationships are neither irrational nor aimless. All reciprocal social relations are responsible, which is another way of saying that all reciprocal social relations are directed by purposes. Sometimes purpose or goal is forgotten and sometimes it is embedded in the unconscious. Even so, until replaced by a new purpose or goal, it gives guidance of

function to actions and reactions that are reciprocal in a collectively. Random activity by aimless individuals is uncharacteristic of human beings in groups and communities. (p. 20)

Given these theoretical assumptions, Willie and Greenblatt make several hypotheses about the processes of change within social communities. The phenomenological perspective is used to understand community resistance to change, anxiety over new social arrangements, and self-preservation anxiety. Using this approach, Willie and Greenblatt were able to establish theoretical explanations for much of the conflict over desegregation in the ten case studies.

The strength of these types of sociological models is found in their focus on individuals and their motives and intentions. In the Willie and Greenblatt (1981b) studies, however, there is a tendency to focus on the major political players in each city. While there is detail on individuals, they tend to be those individuals with enough power to influence the policy and decision making process. Thus, in the end, the story is told on a grand scale with little detail on the stories and intentions of those individuals most effected by the process.

Three different theoretical perspectives have been described and discussed. Each has been shown to provide knowledge towards an understanding of the process and meaning of desegregation. Seen as a whole, however, something is missing. It must be remembered that desegregation was a symbolic struggle over cultural values and norms until it became a reality for the teachers and students in the classrooms. From the theoretical perspectives described (political, anthropological, and social) a guide is provided for interpreting specific historical issues concerning the experience of

teachers. With the addition of oral history and its accompanying narrative theory, relevant components of other models retain explanatory utility while further elucidation is rendered. The next chapter will describe methods of oral history, detail the use of oral history in this project, and explain methods of interpretation of oral narratives.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Oral History and Narrative Interpretation Methods Used in the Study**

#### **Introduction**

The central question at this point is: why use oral history? The simple answer is that oral history expands opportunity for understanding without limiting existing methods. Oral history allows the researcher to gain insight and understanding in ways unavailable in any other form. One famous oral historian, T. Harry Williams (1970), provides an example of the ability of oral history to provide previously unavailable accounts in this description of his research on Huey Long:

As I continued in the research, I became increasingly convinced of the validity of oral history. Not only was it a necessary tool in compiling the history of the recent past, but it also provided an unusually intimate look into that past. I found that the politicians were astonishingly frank in detailing their dealings, and often completely realistic in viewing themselves. But they had not trusted a record of these dealings to paper, and it would not have occurred to them to transcribe their experiences at a later time. Anybody who heard them would have to conclude that the full and inside story of politics is not in *any* age committed to the documents. (p. ix)

For Williams, oral history was not a replacement for other forms of historiography; rather it was an addition to other forms of history. Yet, a struggle for all historians is the elusive task of making meaning out of the past. For oral history to provide a method for a better understanding of the meaning of events, there must be some method for the interpretation of narrative.

Oral history has seldom been used in educational research to answer specific research questions; nevertheless, it affords a unique new qualitative research method in which to address the historical nature of the research questions guiding this effort.

Because education is a social phenomena, the opportunity to learn by talking to people is always present. Oral history allows the researcher to draw connections between himself, the interview subject, and the social, political and economic context of the topic. Oral history provides understanding and opportunities for interpretation of the cultural and historical contexts of schools. As such, oral history is a legitimate method for developing knowledge on how to lead, make personnel decisions, and participate in policy development within school communities. There is further value in the awareness, recognition, and validation of different voices in schools which through oral history will improve the democratic environment in school communities. Finally, oral history provides a lens to examine the use of language and text through which desegregation policy has been developed and implemented in schools.

#### **Advantages of and Problems With Narrative Interpretation**

Oral history is often used to understand how people reflect upon their own involvement in historical processes. In terms of desegregation the historical process is one of crossing cultural and contextual borders. An oral recollection of personal involvement with a social/cultural process may be interpreted through narrative theory. Works by Thompson (1988) and Portelli (1991) provide theoretical explanations on oral history and suggestions for the interpretation of oral narrative.

Thompson emphasizes the social function of history and the relationship between method and meaning in history. According to Thompson:

History survives as a social activity only because it has a meaning for people today. The voice of the past matters to the present. But, whose voice -- or voices -- are to be heard? Thus while method and meaning

can be treated as independent themes, they are at the bottom inseparable. The choice of evidence must reflect the role of history in the community. (p. viii)

Thus, for Thompson, the role of community is essential. History should be a community activity. The historians role is not to take information from the community and provide objective interpretation. Thompson explains:

For the co-operative nature of the oral history approach has led to a radical questioning of the fundamental relationship between history and the community. Historical information need not be taken away from the community for interpretation and presentation by the professional historian. Through oral history the community can, and should, be given the confidence to write its own history. (p.15)

The social purpose of oral history is realized through its community function.

Thompson claims that oral history is "...about individual lives--and any life is of interest" (p. 18). Further, oral history "... depends upon speech, not the much more demanding and restricted skill in writing" (p. 18). Most importantly, Thompson concludes, "History should not merely comfort; it should provide a challenge, and understanding which helps toward change" (p. 20). As an oral history, the methods used in this study deliberately attempted to promote, as Thompson suggests, "understanding which help's toward change."

Thompson differentiates oral history from traditional history because oral history openly recognizes that it is impossible to remove subjectivity from the historical process. According to Thompson (1988): "Every historical source derived from human perception is subjective, but only the oral source allows us to challenge that subjectivity: to unpick the layers of memory, dig back into its darkness, hoping to reach

the hidden truth" (p. 150). Because of the subjective nature of all history, including oral history, Thompson calls interpretation, "The making of history" (p. 234).

Thompson (1988, p. 234) describes three issues in the interpretation of oral history. First, is the choice of presentation. Second, is the method of evaluating and testing of evidence. And third, is "...how do we relate the evidence we have found to wider patterns and theories of history?" (p. 234). The third issue involves the making of meaning from oral history.

For the purposes of this study, the choice of presentation is predetermined as a dissertation. Thus the interviews have been indexed, transcribed, and portions have been selected for inclusion in support of arguments developed in the work. Along with various choices of mediums for presentation, Thompson (1988, p. 235) also discusses the form of presentation. These forms include a single life story narrative (p. 237), a collection of stories (p. 237), and cross-analysis (p. 238). The form used in this study is cross-analysis because the narratives are used to construct an argument. Thompson describes the cross-analysis form and its use:

The third form is that of cross-analysis: the oral evidence is treated as quarry from which to construct an argument. It is of course possible within one book to combine analysis with the presentation of fuller life stories.... But wherever the prime aim becomes analysis, the overall shape can no longer be governed by the life story form of the evidence, but must emerge from the inner logic of the argument. This will normally require much briefer quotations, with evidence from one interview compared with that from another, and combined with evidence from other types of source material. Argument and cross-analysis are clearly essential for any systematic development of the interpretation of history. On the other hand, the loss in this form of presentation is equally clear. Because of this, these basic forms are not so much

exclusive alternatives as complementary, and in many cases the same project needs to be brought out in more than one of them. (p. 238)

Thompson's recommendation is followed in the dissertation and included are elements of life story and collections of stories along with cross-analysis regardless of the tension between the two types of forms. Thompson views this tension as an advantage of oral history claiming, "But this is a tension in which rests the strength of oral history" (p. 239).

According to Thompson (1988, p. 252), oral history combines field work and interpretation. In addition, Thompson suggest that the broader scope of social, political, and economic theories are often separate from individual choices regarding work and family. For Thompson, interpretation of oral history allows connections to be made between separate public and private spheres of life. Thompson explains:

In studying the transition from one culture to another, in time, or through migration, we can not only look at those cultures separately, but observe the paths that individuals took from one culture to another. And almost every individual life breaks across the boundaries between home and work. Escaping from these conceptual boxes can produce strikingly new hypotheses even from a small case study. (p. 257)

This statement is particularly relevant to the current study because of the cultural change demanded of cross-over teachers and the tensions created between home and work life for cross-over teachers.

Thompson (1988, p. 258) warns of the danger of oral sources undercutting the influence of the forces of macro economic and structural change. This danger is mitigated, however, by the "cumulative effect of individual pressure for change" (p. 259). In an even stronger statement, Thompson states: "The changing patterns of



millions of conscious decisions of this kind (normal personal life decisions) are of as much, probably more, importance for social change than the acts of politicians which are the usual stuff of history" (p. 259). Thompson argues from this premise that part of the structure of interpretation must include "the cumulative role of the individual" (p. 259).

The dichotomy presented when oral narrative is interpreted is further elucidated by Thompson (1988, p. 261) in two different types of theories which correspond to the public world of the general society and the private life of the individual. Thompson concludes his work with a description of the two types of theories and a call for oral history to bridge the differences between them. Thomas explains:

At present we can turn to two general types of theoretical interpretation. On the one hand there are the big theories of social organization, social control, the division of labor, the class struggle, and social change: the functionalist and other schools of sociology and the historical theory of Marxism. On the other hand there is the theory of individual personality, of language and the subconscious, represented by the psychoanalytical approach. They can be layered together, as in an individual biography, but no satisfactory way has yet been found of bonding them. (p. 261)

Thompson admits there is little guidance on how this gap can be bridged. Nevertheless, Thompson believes it must be done. He makes the following call for oral historians:

It is nevertheless an essential task if history is to provide a meaningful interpretation of common life. And in this task, oral history will have a vital role. Its evidence intrinsically combines the objective with the subjective, and leads us between public and private words. (p. 262)

This study attempts to respond to Thompson's call as it considers the narratives of school personnel during the cross-over from both broad social constructs described in Chapter One and individual life experiences described in the narratives.

Like Thompson (1988), Portelli (1991) also examines key issues in the interpretation of oral narrative. Specifically, Portelli discusses the process of memory, and the form of oral history narrative. Portelli also hints at the subjective nature of history, stating:

Rather than replacing previous truths with alternative ones, however, oral history has made us uncomfortably aware of the elusive quality of historical truth itself. Yet, an aspiration toward 'reality,' 'fact,' and 'truth' is essential to our work: though we know that certainty is bound to escape us, the search provides focus, shape, and purpose to everything we do. (p. ix)

The present study is a search for truth; however, it also recognizes the impossibility of certainty. For Portelli, meaning is provided from the search and as a result he provides important guidelines for the practice of oral history.

Portelli (1991, p. 2) emphasizes methodological problems resulting from oral narrative. Of particular interest is the relationship between memory and event. Portelli acknowledges that memory is often faulty; yet, for Portelli, that fact that oral sources are not always reliable is a strength of oral history. Portelli claims: "Rather than being a weakness, this however, their strength: errors, inventions, and myths lead us through and beyond facts to their meanings" (p. 2). Portelli believes that oral history tells more about meaning than events. Thus there is an opportunity to understand the speaker's relationship to their history, as Portelli explains:

But the unique and precious element which oral sources force upon the historian and which no other sources possess in equal measure is the speaker's subjectivity. If the approach to research is broad and articulated enough, a cross section of the subjectivity of a group or a class may emerge. Oral sources tell us not just what people did, but what they wanted to do, what they believed they were doing, and what they

think they did. Oral sources may not add much to what we know, for instance, of the material cost to strike to the workers involved; but they tell us a good deal about its psychological costs. (p. 50)

This quote emphasizes the reason why oral history is well suited to the study of school desegregation. This study reveals what school personnel in East Baton Rouge Parish wanted to do, what they believed they were doing, and what they think they did. It also reveals the psychological costs of the cross-over in new and illuminating ways.

In addition to Thompson (1988) and Portelli (1991), the famous American oral historian, Studs Terkel (1992), provides an excellent example of the use of oral narrative to illuminate issues of race in his book, Race: How Blacks and Whites feel about the American obsession. Terkel's style is loose and flowing. Stories are presented to the reader in the first person with amazing depth and feeling and with minimal analysis or detached commentary. Regardless, the stories are rich in detail and, one might say, full of meaning. Clearly, from Terkel's example, oral history is an art. The better artist the oral historian is, the better he/she will allow the voice of the narrative, the individual's personal story, to be clearly and accurately expressed.

While this dissertation is an oral history, it is also research in the field of educational administration. Like oral history, theorists in educational research also contend with issues of race, subjectivity, and meaning. The next section considers current thinking in educational research about race, subjectivity, and meaning and connects this thinking to issues of oral history previously discussed.

### **Issues of Race, Subjectivity, and Meaning in Educational Research**

This study is a work about race. Given this, a central concern becomes: what role does race play in the methods of research and interpretation? Or, is it possible for a historical researcher and scholar to assume a race neutral position? The simple answer, of course, is "no." Recent literature on educational research has addressed this problem. And, if not exactly providing a solution, it does offer some possibilities to work with. Scheurich and Young (1997) discuss reasons for the lack of a response from educational researchers to arguments that contend that all research epistemologies are racially biased. These authors argue that silence on the issue is "... a lack of understanding among researchers as to how race is a critically significant epistemological problem in educational research" (p. 4).

To develop their argument, Scheurich and Young (1997) discuss five categories of racism. Overt and covert racism operate on the individual level. Social and institutional racism operate on the organizational level and thus provide a social context for overt and covert racism. Finally, civilizational racism creates the possibility for the other four categories. Certainly, all five categories of racism have impacted efforts to desegregate schools. In fact, all types of racism evident in the narrative collected, and are discussed within the interpretation section.

Most significant for this study, however, are the implications for research of civilizational racism. Scheurich and Young's (1997) discussion of epistemological racism is focused on the idea of civilizational racism. More specifically, it is argued

that epistemological racism emerges out of civilizational racism. Scheurich and Young claim:

(E)pistemological racism comes from or emerges out of what we have labeled the civilizational level, the deepest, most primary level of a culture of people. The civilization level is the level that encompasses the deepest, most primary assumptions about the nature of reality (ontology), the ways of knowing that reality (epistemology), and the disputational contours of right and wrong or morality and values (axiology) -- in short, presumptions about the real, the true, and the good. (p. 7)

Therefore, there is no such thing as a context-free epistemology. Scheurich and Young describe the world view of the dominant culture in America today as Euro-American modernism.

The civilizational racism that stems from Euro-American modernism is summed up in the belief that Euro-American people and their religious, social, political, and economic institutions are superior to those of other cultures. The authors point out that prevailing views of individuality, truth, education, free enterprise, good conduct and social welfare have been developed by men who are all White. This same group has also developed the dominant epistemologies (such as, positivism, neo-realism, post-positivism, interpretivism, constructivism, critical theory, and postmodernism/post-structuralism). The argument is made that all of the current epistemological foundations for educational research are a product of Euro-American dominance. Epistemological racism is the result.

Scheurich and Young (1997) go on to describe three types of negative consequences of epistemological racism. First, epistemologies that arise out of different

social histories are not generally accepted by the mainstream research community.

Second, research methods developed by a dominant group tend to misrepresent the lives of subordinate groups. And third, it is easier for Whites to utilize the dominant epistemologies because they have been developed within their own social histories. Clearly, because this author is a "European American" researcher, the major challenge of epistemological racism is the second negative consequence. How is it possible to avoid misrepresenting the lives of subordinate groups?

One alternative might be to adopt Terkel's (1992) method and present the narratives with as little commentary and interpretation as possible. To some extent, this has been done in Chapters Four and Five; however, this work also uses the form of cross-analysis suggested by Thompson (1988). Scheurich and Young (1997) provide a tool for cross-analysis through their recommendation to use an epistemology developed by a non-western subordinate group. This, unfortunately, is an impossibility and highlights a major fallacy in Scheurich and Young's reasoning.

It needs to be recognized that the epistemological arguments presented in the Scheurich and Young (1997) article are grounded in epistemological assumptions. The premise that all knowledge is socially and historically embedded is based on assumptions that could be labeled postmodern. It is impossible for any voice to avoid some implicit assumptions about the nature of knowledge. Epistemological assumptions can never be separated from the use of language. And, the act of two beings communicating through language requires epistemological assumptions. Scheurich and Young might just as well discuss the racial bias of language. Thus, when

Scheurich and Young assume that all knowledge is socially constructed, then it becomes impossible to separate knowledge from meaning because the creation of meaning is knowledge. This includes the meaning of the words that communicate knowledge between individuals.

Certainly, in a complex civilization, the dominant language will be a reflection of the dominant culture. It also follows that the dominant culture's language will result in a racial bias against members of groups with different cultural histories and different languages. A case in point is the term "epistemology" itself. How can the definition of epistemology ever be viewed as something other than a creation of western civilization? Epistemology is a western philosophical construct. Therefore, to even discuss epistemology as such results in a form of bias, or civilizational racism. Moreover, to create an epistemological framework is to engage in western philosophy. As such, this is an endeavor which may be difficult for individuals from non-western cultures.

Scheurich and Young (1997) recommend the use of "new non-western epistemologies." Yet, how can this be. Any new epistemology must be described in terms that already have philosophical meaning and thus they describe knowledge form and content rather than the philosophical grounding of knowledge construction. They describe a method of determining what knowledge is within a set of assumptions that are defined through the existing meaning of epistemology.

Fortunately, this argument does not diminish the value of new approaches to knowledge construction. What is being challenged is the legitimacy of labeling new

methods of knowledge construction developed by individuals who are not of European heritage as "new" epistemologies.

The key insight of Scheurich and Young (1997) for the purpose of this study is the recognition that the use of language contains inherent bias. This significantly changes the nature of the dilemma posed by civilizational racism. In fact, this recognition goes a step further than Scheurich and Young. There currently exists in the philosophical foundations of educational research a complete range of choices between diametrically opposite epistemological positions. Positivism provides a theory of knowledge which claims that truth can be objectively determined through the application of the scientific method and precise use of language. Postmodernism, in contrast, claims that truth can never be fully known and all knowledge is socially constructed. All epistemological positions fall somewhere on a continuum between these two sets of assumptions, including those defined as "new" epistemologies. We have no more choice in this than we have in determining the cultural and historical bases of the language we use. It would make no less sense to talk about "new" light and dark. The English language is the language we use to understand and describe schools, the language we use to construct knowledge.

There is much utility in a common language. Through a common language there remains a tool, a linguistic convention, a philosophical tradition, from which we might measure the value of knowledge claims derived through different methods. Therefore, when researchers from different cultures use concrete experience, language to assess knowledge claims, ethics, qualitative methods, analyses and description of



data, critical dialogue, or any form of knowledge construction, the resulting knowledge claims, either Afrocentric or other, can be justified as more than relativist proclamations. Realizing that there is inherent racial bias in all use of language, we can focus discourse on where upon the epistemological continuum research might be grounded. More specifically, any researcher may choose the epistemological position that best constructs knowledge reflective of his/her particular research goal and which is reflective of his or her experience or group. It is up to the researcher, however, to use a common language, in the case of the United States the European language if English, to support his/her methods and the value of the results achieved.

The alternative to the proceeding view is no historical/cultural linguistic foundation for determining how we know. In this type of case, then, what we know becomes relative and there is no measure for assessing its value. If, on the other hand, we accept the limitations of our philosophical and linguistic devices in determining how we know, acknowledge that all representations are agreed upon norms, and strive to improve upon common representations, then we may focus our attention on reducing the racial bias of what we know while we retain some ability to assess value, agree upon meaning, and communicate knowledge.

This study attempts to honestly confront the problem of the civilizational bias of language previously discussed. The solution to the problem of reducing the racial bias in what we know, in this case the knowledge developed through this work on school desegregation, needs to be examined. The common response to this problem is for the researcher to assume or achieve some level of neutrality. Thompson (1988) and Portelli

(1991), however, emphasize the subjective nature of all history and promote oral history's recognition of subjectivity.

Egea-Kuehne (1996) examined "neutrality in education" and provides useful ideas that have bearing on the methods of interpretation used in this study. Egea-Kuehne claims that attempts to "neutralize education" are tantamount to a political decision not to educate. Attempts to "neutralize education" are united with the same problem of assuming an objective stance, and that is:

(T)hat all these approaches share a certain concept of learning and knowledge supported by the positivistic view of ideas and values as internal ideal representations, quite distinct from their materially embodied expression (the *idea* of the object as distinct and separate from the *actual* object). (p. 155)

Once the assumption of the existence of ideal representations is rejected, then the idea is always separate from the event.

The methodological problem of this research is a direct confrontation with difference and other. As such, Egea-Kuehne's (1996) argument is highly relevant. Although she is arguing against curriculum neutrality, the same concepts of neutrality influence the assumptions grounding research. According to Egea-Kuehne, "Where there is neutrality and frozen consensus, there is no possible authentic learning, no possible growth, no enrichment of our individual, national, and global capital of knowledge" (p. 155). The alternative for students is having to "wrestle with the various voices and ideas embedded in any text worth its salt, having to decide for themselves on issues in which antinomies and aporias are inherent, having (sometimes at what appears

to be great risks) to responsibly take a stand on the perhaps seemingly undecidable" (p. 157).

There is in this work an assumption regarding the value of the narrative collected and a corresponding risk for taking a position on ideas with inherent contradiction. There is always risk in narrative interpretation; yet, without risk, the ability of authentic learning is removed. To declare a neutral position in advance is to assume an ideal representation; and therefore, interpret in advance.

Egea-Kuehne (1996) uses a phrase "necessity of otherness and multiple voices" (p. 157) which is ideally suited to this research and Thompson's (1988) and Portelli's (1991) call for subjectivity. Egea-Kuehne claims:

From a dialogical, heteroglossic, non-neutral perspective, developing an ability to learn is therefore essentially dependent on developing a competency in understanding anything *other* than, *different* from, the learners' prior knowledge and experience of self-otherness and the world. (p. 157)

This process involves including otherness; or, using multiple and often conflicting voices to provide "opportunities for critical reflection on the dialogical language in use" (pg. 157). Again, Egea-Kuehne's concluded that, "Excluding these voices, that is neutralizing education, is tantamount to a political decision not to educate" (p. 158). In this case, an attempt to neutralize or to make objective this scholarship and research on desegregation, would amount to a decision to not learn from the interview subjects.

Unfortunately, the alternative decision to avoid any assumption of neutrality preserves the problem of analysis; a problem that by Portelli's (1991) understanding of the illusive nature of truth, remains unsolvable. Nevertheless, a need remains to

interpret history and oral narrative without excluding, or even worse, changing valuable and different voices. Popkewitz (1997) and Popkewitz and Brennan (1997) have developed a theory they label "social epistemology" that, with some modifications, serves the purposes of cross-analysis and narrative interpretation well.

Popkewitz and Brennan (1997) use the writings of Foucault to discuss the term "critical" as it is concerned with issues of power and domination in education. The authors declare:

At one level, critical refers to a broad band of disciplined questioning of the ways in which power works through the discursive practices and performances of schooling. The various modes of critical inquiry seek to understand, for example, how the marginalization of people is constructed, the various forms in which power operates.... Further, there is a need for greater self-reflexivity about the implications of intellectual work as a political project. We see Foucault's work as both generative and illustrative of an intellectual tradition that provides certain breaks with the ordering principles of critical traditions dominating Western Left thinking since the turn of the century. (p. 288)

These authors believe Foucault expands critical thinking beyond the hegemony of Marxist theories of power. The focus is on "the changing terrains of 'critical' studies" (p. 289).

It needs to be said at this point that this discussion of "social epistemology" does not include a whole-hearted endorsement of these ideas as a complete and universal epistemology. "Social epistemology" is discussed here as a way, a method, or frame to "re-present" reality. In this case, it will involve the representing of the experiences of educators during desegregation. Like all representations, or presentations for that matter, "social epistemology" is a choice with advantages and disadvantages. It is, like

all others, a representation that is incomplete with certain assumptions and ideas that lend themselves to criticism. Regardless, because of the historical issues involved in desegregation including the marginalization of a group, the focus on public education, and the critical role of political, social, and economic power, the use of "social epistemology" allows for the further exploring of narrative and is capable of providing useful meaning to the stories' of the interviewees.

Popkewitz and Brennan set "social epistemology" apart from what they call "the philosophy of consciousness and the privileging of the subject" (p. 291). "Philosophy of consciousness" is based on the belief that systematic knowledge and reason applied through the social sciences could better society. "Privileging of the subject," on the other hand, is the assumption that knowledge has a subject, a set of individuals who are the source of change or keepers of the status quo. The authors sum up the results of the domination of "philosophy of consciousness" and apply it to schools:

...the very systems of reasoning that are to produce equality, justice, and diversity may inscribe systems of representations that construct "otherness" through the concrete principles of pedagogical classification that normalize, differentiate, and compare. (p. 292)

In addition, the authors posit that social progress is possible without assuming intellectual authority as the agent of progress.

"Social epistemology" as a response to "philosophy of consciousness" is used as a "strategy in order to place the objects constituted by the knowledge of schooling into historically formed patterns and power relations" (p. 293). The detailed discussion of

"social epistemology" provided by Popkewitz and Brennan is particularly relevant to the goals of this research:

The significance of social epistemology is that it helps us recognize that when we "use" language, it may not be us speaking. It also recognizes that the speaker is not defining all the meaning, as has been assumed in subject-centered approaches to social sciences. Speech is ordered through principles of classification that are socially formed through a myriad of historical practices. When teachers talk about school as management, teaching as the production of learning, or children as being "at-risk," these terms are not "merely" the personal words of the teacher, but are produced in the context of historically constructed "ways of reasoning." The "reasoning" inscribed in systems of ideas order "seeing," talking, and acting. (p. 293)

The alternative presented by the authors is a "subject-decentered" approach.

Decentering the subject unites the production of knowledge and power. Knowledge is understood as always situated or contextualized.

The resulting points made by Popkewitz and Brennan provide specific language that is able to guide interpretive efforts:

There is a continual need to unpack the frameworks within which we are constituted rather than to assume that liberation can be achieved by overthrowing previous regimes. Again in comparison to ideological critique, postmodern theorist posit no substratum of truth to be revealed through critique; rather they examine the principles by which the frameworks and selves are themselves constituted. (p. 295)

Popkewitz and Brennan provide the solution used in this study to the "epistemological problem" revealed at the beginning of this section. The narratives collected are interpreted from a guiding set of principles including an examination of constituted frameworks or historically constructed ways of reasoning. Popkewitz and Brennan (1997) make it clear that "Inquiry should seek to understand how the rules of reason that

structure our practices for change and the classifications and distinctions among groups of people have been constructed" (p. 295). With these goals in mind, this research examined the issues of the desegregation and 1970 cross-over in the East Baton Rouge Public School System.

### **Research Methods**

The study of the desegregation experience for educators in East Baton Rouge Parish during the 1960's and early 1970's utilizes oral accounts and other primary and secondary sources of data. Oral narratives were collected and interpreted. These recordings document the perceptions, attitudes and experiences of six educators. In addition, journalistic accounts, letters to the editors, and periodicals have been examined to gauge the external environment of the community. Further, court documents have been examined in order to understand the various positions of interested parties in the Davis case. The primary goal is to document the experience of "cross-over" teachers; however, the broader contextual research documents the complete desegregation history in East Baton Rouge Parish between 1956 and 1970 in order to provide a setting for the oral narrative.

The mechanical details of the oral history methods are based on Ives (1995) and Brown (1988). Both Ives and Brown provide detailed procedures for producing high quality tapes, organizing the data, and using oral history to document the lives of ordinary men and women. The decision on who to interview was based on several factors. A key goal was to acquire individual detailed accounts of impressions, opinions, feelings, and commentary on the desegregation of East Baton Rouge Public

Schools and the 1970 cross-over. Thus, both an African-American and White cross-over teacher were interviewed along with four other educators directly involved in desegregation and the cross-over in East Baton Rouge Parish.

The interviews of the cross-over teachers occupied two separate sessions each and cover the issues and topics in depth. The additional four educators were each interviewed in one session lasting between one and two hours. A goal of all of the interviews was to develop trust and gather quality narrative. The six people interviewed includes the two cross-over teachers, the Superintendent of the East Baton Rouge Parish school system from 1965-1969, the District Science Supervisor during desegregation in the district, a longtime School Librarian who served as a Cross-over Liaison during the 1970-71 school year, and a former band teacher at Lee High School and Baton Rouge High School and Director of the All-Parish Band and All Parish Orchestra. Four of the interviewees are White and two are African American. There were four men and two women.

All of the interviewees had extensive experience in the East Baton Rouge School System including working throughout the desegregation years. The educators interviewed were:

- Ms. Helen Haw (1998, 1999) – White cross-over teacher.
- Mr. Freddie Millican (1999a, 1999b) – African American cross-over teacher.
- Ms. Joyce Robinson (1999) – African American librarian, School Desegregation Liaison.
- Mr. John Gerbrecht (1999) – White band teacher, Directed the All Parish Band
- Mr. Robert Aertker (1997) – White East Baton Rouge School Superintendent from 1965-1969.



Dr. Donald Hoover (1998) – White East Baton Rouge Science Supervisor during desegregation, member of the bi-racial committee which developed the desegregation plan implemented in 1970.

The interviews reveal the interviewee's perceptions about his/her desegregation experience and his/her feelings regarding the impact of desegregation on teachers, students, and community. In addition, interviewees were asked to assess the successes and failures of the early desegregation efforts in East Baton Rouge Parish. The subjects were given a list of topics; however, there was no list of specific questions. This allowed the interview to flow in a less structured manner.

Once the tapes were complete, they were indexed. Indexing involves making a list of topics and topic changes using the tape counter on the recorder. Next, the tapes were transcribed. The transcriptions record the words of the interviewees and the interviewer. For the purpose of clarity, false starts and unnecessary contractions were removed from the transcripts. Otherwise, the transcripts accurately reflect the conversations. Chapter Four presents the narratives of the two cross-over teachers and Chapter Five presents, in less detail, the narratives of the other four educators.

To place the narratives in their historical context, however, an account of the East Baton Rouge Parish desegregation experience is needed. The next chapter, Chapter Three, reports on the results of the contextual research on the history of desegregation in East Baton Rouge Parish. Newspaper accounts, court documents and interviews have been compiled to present the story of desegregation in the parish leading up to and briefly following the massive teacher cross-over in the fall of 1970.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Early School Desegregation In East Baton Rouge Parish: Resist, Delay, and Dilute**

#### **Introduction**

Desegregation litigation in East Baton Rouge Parish began in 1956 with the filing of the Davis lawsuit. As the height of the civil rights era, the following fourteen years were a period of change in race relations for the East Baton Rouge School District, the city of Baton Rouge, the state of Louisiana, and the nation. The present chapter will describe the events surrounding the changes in East Baton Rouge Parish from a legally segregated dual school system, to a “grade-a-year” desegregation plan, to a “freedom of choice” desegregated school system; and finally, to a system in the midst of court-controlled desegregation. The description provides the historical background for understanding and interpreting the narratives of cross-over teachers in East Baton Rouge Parish. This chapter is the story of early desegregation in the Baton Rouge community and provides a broad cultural context for the experiences and narratives of the cross-over teachers.

The early desegregation of public schools in East Baton Rouge Parish was limited. In 1954, the East Baton Rouge School System had 30,422 students of which 11,823 (38.9%) were Black (East Baton Rouge Parish School Board, 1958). There were no Black students attending school with White students in 1954. Fifteen years later, in August of 1969, the number of Black students in the district had risen to 23,000; however only 3000 Black students in the district attended school with White

children. School faculties had also not been integrated in the fall of 1969 (“Judge West,” 1970).

The limited levels of desegregation in East Baton Rouge Parish schools ended on July 23, 1970, when Federal District Court Judge E. Gordon West approved a “neighborhood school” plan developed by a biracial committee. The plan called for desegregation of faculty, staff, transportation, extracurricular activities, student body, and school facilities beginning in the fall of 1970 (“Judge West,” 1970). The school district estimated that for the 1970 school year, 18,465 Black school children would be attending classes with White students (“Integration Exceeds, 1970).

In this chapter, the fourteen years between 1956 and 1970, will be termed “early school desegregation in East Baton Rouge Parish.” Historical records cited in this chapter support the claim that dominant political, social and economic powers including state officials, parish officials, and local school officials made considerable efforts during early school desegregation in East Baton Rouge Parish to resist, delay, and dilute the move toward desegregation. The terms “resist,” “delay,” and “dilute” are descriptive of further divisions of early school desegregation in East Baton Rouge Parish that correspond to major changes in the way the dominant culture in the community responded to desegregation changes. The first, 1956-1961, is labeled the “resist period.” The “resist period” spans the time from the filing of the Davis lawsuit in 1956 until the 1961 ruling of the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals (Davis, 1961) ordering the East Baton Rouge school system to desegregate. The second period, 1961-1963, is termed the “delay period.” Faced with the inevitability of desegregation in the

schools, state and local officials proceeded to make every effort to delay the start of desegregation. This phase lasted until 1963, when the schools were ordered to begin desegregation at the start of the 1963 school year ("Judge Orders," 1963). The third, 1963-1970, is called the "dilute period." The "dilute period" is marked by successful efforts to limit the scope of integration in the district as much as possible. The "dilute period" ended with Judge West's ruling in the summer of 1970 ("Judge West").

The plaintiffs in the Davis (1961) lawsuit were encouraged and given legal counsel from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) ("File Suit," 1956). Attorneys for the NAACP made it clear that the legal action was an effort to get the East Baton Rouge School District to comply with the Brown I (1954) decision. This chapter is primarily oriented towards the third goal of identifying community attitudes. The chapter also establishes a context for the first two goals of understanding the perception of cross-over teachers and desegregation's effect on teaching and learning. Certainly, in a community the size of East Baton Rouge, with a school system of over 50,000 students, there is a wide variety of opinions and positions. The historical record indicates that this is true.

### **The Baton Rouge Desegregation Case**

#### **Resist: East Baton Rouge Resists Public School Desegregation**

Shortly after the Brown I ruling, local civil rights activists in East Baton Rouge Parish attempted to challenge the segregated status of Baton Rouge schools and test the strength of the Brown I decision. At the beginning of the school year following the Brown I decision, on September 3, 1954, a group of African-American parents escorted

thirty-nine of their children and attempted to enroll them into the elementary school closest to their homes ("Negro Group Asks," 1954). The students were denied admission to the Gilmer Wright Elementary School based on state law and school board policy . As a result, these thirty-nine students were forced to take a bus to a "Black" school some distance away ("Negro Group Asks," 1954).

State Senator William Rainach of Summerfield responded to the effort to enroll Black students in Gilmer Wright by saying "The NAACP is plunging the South into racial hatred when unity is vital to the future of our whole country" ("Negro Group Asks," 1954). The acting Superintendent of the East Baton Rouge Parish School System, A. T. Browne ("Negro Group Asks," 1954), released the following statement in response to the attempt to enroll African-American students:

The East Baton Rouge Parish School Board understands that it is the law of the state of Louisiana that certain schools shall be designated as schools for White students and others designated as schools for Negro students. To the knowledge of the board this law is still in effect and that it would have no legal authority to act in any other fashion. The board will continue to operate the schools as in previous years with certain schools being designated specifically for White students and certain other schools being designated specifically for Negro students until such time as the state law is modified or changed to the contrary. (pp. 1A, 8A)

The state law cited by Browne was drafted by a committee of ten legislators led by Senator Rainach charged by segregationist leaders in Louisiana with developing a plan to "sidestep" the Brown I (1954) decision.

The action of the Louisiana legislature indicated the beginning of a comprehensive effort by Louisiana state government to respond to the Brown I (1954) decision. The state legislature passed several segregation laws during the 1954 session,

including an amendment to the Louisiana State Constitution granting school district superintendents power to assign pupils to schools ("Negro Group Sues," 1955). The amendment also placed the maintenance of school segregation under the "inherent police powers of the state" to maintain law and order.

In response, on August 31, 1955, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored Peoples (NAACP) filed suit to block \$100,000 of state expenditures to defend school segregation ("Negro Group Sues,"). The \$100,000 expenditure had been proposed by the Louisiana Board of Liquidation of State Debt and approved by the state legislature in a mail ballot for the purpose of enforcing the official policy of segregation in the state of Louisiana. Nine days later, in a rally in Baton Rouge, the NAACP announced that it was preparing to file suit against the East Baton Rouge School District ("NAACP to File," 1955). The goal was to make Baton Rouge a second front beyond New Orleans for the desegregation of public schools.

Six and a half months later, on February 29, 1956, a group of African-American parents in Baton Rouge, supported by the NAACP and several prominent civil rights leaders, including A. P. Tureaud from New Orleans and future U.S. Supreme Court Justice, Thurgood Marshall, filed a class action lawsuit asking a federal court stop the East Baton Rouge Parish School Board from operating separate schools for Blacks and Whites ("File Suit," 1956). Today, nearly 43 years later, the Davis lawsuit remains in litigation. The suit, filed by thirty-seven African-American parents of school children living in East Baton Rouge Parish, requested that the East Baton Rouge School Board cease from operating separate schools for Black and White children.

The state of Louisiana struck back at the NAACP the day following the filing of the suit by challenging the legal authority of the group to operate in the state ("Ask Ban," 1956). Ironically, the state attempted to ban the NAACP from the state by using a 1924 statute originally intended to rid the state of the Ku Klux Klan. The state filed a suit in state district court requesting that all activities of the NAACP be banned. The suit claimed that the NAACP had failed to file annual membership lists with the Secretary of State as required by the 1924 anti-Klan statute. This action was hailed by legislative leaders. Senator Rainach ("Aks Ban," 1956), Chairman of the Joint Legislative Committee on Segregation, said: "The NAACP is an alien, arrogant, destructive force seeking to drive a bitter wedge between the White and Negro races in the South. It should be destroyed completely by laws and public opinion and driven from our midst" (p. A8).

The state of Louisiana also joined other southern states in an effort to challenge the Brown I & II decisions at the federal level. Nineteen U.S. Senators and seventy-seven representatives from the South issued a public manifesto in which they pledged to "exercise every lawful means" to reverse the Brown decisions ("96 Southern Solons," 1956). The manifesto, in part, claimed that the Supreme Court's decision:

(H)as planted hatred and suspicion where there has been heretofore friendship and understanding.... Without regard to the consent of the governed, outside agitators are threatening immediate and revolutionary changes in our public school systems. If done, this is certain to destroy the system of public education in some of the states. (p. 4A)

The conflict between those supporting school segregation and those supporting school integration in Louisiana centered on New Orleans for the first three years

following the filing of the Davis suit (Ravitch, 1985; Baker, 1996; Devore & Logsdon, 1991; Garvin, 1997). The complexity and seriousness of this struggle is well summarized by Read (1977):

The New Orleans litigation is, complete unto itself, an encyclopedia of every tactic of resistance ever employed by all other states combined. Over the relatively short span of time between 1952 and 1962, that one case consumed thousands of hours of lawyers' and judges' time: it required forty-one separate judicial decisions involving the energies of every Fifth circuit judge, two district court judges, and the consideration of the U.S. Supreme Court on 11 separate decisions. By the end of the decade, backed by the Fifth Circuit and in the face of attacks from all flanks, Federal District Judges J. Skelly Wright and Herbert Christenberry had invalidated a total of forty-four state statutes enacted by the Louisiana legislature; had cited and convicted two state officials for contempt of court; and had issued injunctions forbidding the continued flouting of their orders against a state court, all state executives, and the entire membership of the Louisiana Legislature. (pp. 14-15)

All three branches of State government in Louisiana were clearly busy during this time doing their best to preserve the status quo of school segregation. New Orleans was the test case to use the federal judiciary to challenge the wide assortment of state legislative, judicial, and executive actions designed to resist the implementation of the Brown I & II decisions.

The New Orleans case reached a milestone on October 13, 1959, when Judge J. Skelly Wright ordered the Orleans Parish School Board to file a desegregation plan by May 16, 1960 ("NAACP Asks," 1959). Because of the success of the New Orleans litigation, the NAACP sought to reactivate the case in Baton Rouge and a similar, but rural, case in St. Helena Parish. This action was taken following a ruling by State District Judge John Dixon Jr. granting a restraining order sought by the state to prevent



the NAACP's statewide convention ("NAACP Meeting," 1959). The NAACP canceled a statewide meeting scheduled for the following day.

On April 28, 1960, Federal District Court Judge Skelly Wright ruled in favor of the plaintiffs in the Davis case ("Judgement Favors," 1960). Judge Wright, however, did not provide details for implementation of the decision at that time. The District Attorney for East Baton Rouge, J. St. Clair Favrot, immediately announced plans to appeal the ruling to the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals. One month later, Judge Wright, using Supreme Court language from Brown II, ordered East Baton Rouge to desegregate "with all deliberate speed" ("Federal Judge," 1960, pp. 1A). East Baton Rouge was given an unspecified amount of time to prepare to admit children to school on a non-discriminatory basis. An intervention petition filed by several White parents, claiming that their children's education would suffer if integration were ordered, was denied by Judge Wright at the same time ("Federal Judge," 1960).

The next day, April 29, 1960, the Louisiana legislature passed one of its most famous anti-integration laws. The senate voted 38-0 for "emergency legislation" that established the Louisiana State Sovereignty Commission ("Sovereignty Bill," 1960). The stated purpose of the Sovereignty Commission was to preserve the state's rights and to prevent all forms of racial integration including public school desegregation. One of the sponsors of the bill, State Senator Wendell Harris ("Sovereignty Bill," 1960) of Baton Rouge, made the following remarks before the legislative body :

The sovereignty commission is of extreme importance to our state -- especially with the immediate threat of integration of some of our public schools.... Our bill has been approved by the administration and Gov.

Davis after many hours of work and consultation on the part of several of our leading district attorneys, the attorney general and our citizens who are interested in maintaining the dignity and sovereignty of Louisiana.... I know that we want to calmly and legally proceed with such projects and legislation which will maintain segregation in Louisiana. We believe that passage of the bill providing for the State Sovereignty Commission will be another forward step in accomplishing our purpose. (p. 14B)

The "emergency legislation" component of the law allowed the Sovereignty Commission to form and begin operation immediately. The commission was empowered to conduct investigations and to compel witnesses to testify through the use of subpoenas that would be issued by state courts. The bill also proposed a \$500,000 budget appropriation for the Sovereignty Commission ("Sovereignty Bill," 1960).

The federal court continued to stand in the way of efforts by Louisiana State government to prevent desegregation. One tactic of the state was a motion by the State of Louisiana asking the U.S. Supreme Court for a stay of execution of several lower court decisions that nullified anti-desegregation statutes in Louisiana ("Supreme Court," 1960). This ruling specifically applied to a bill passed during a special session of the legislature asserting that the state had the right to "interpose" its authority when it believed that a Supreme Court ruling was unconstitutional. The Supreme Court firmly declared that "interposition is not a constitutional doctrine. If taken seriously, it is an illegal defiance of the constitutional authority" ("Supreme Court," 1960). The same day this decision was rendered, December 12, 1960, the Louisiana House of Representatives passed several new anti-desegregation laws ("House Votes," 1960). These laws included: a provision to allow school districts to sell abandoned schools to private educational cooperatives; stipulations that the State Attorney General would be the only

legal counsel for the Orleans Parish School Board: and an increase in the penalty for interfering with any state court restraining order, injunction or other judicial decree ("House Votes," 1960).

Also on December 12, 1960, the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals agreed to hear the appeal of Judge Wright's first desegregation order in the Davis case and scheduled a hearing for January 18, 1961. Following the hearing, on February 9, 1961, the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals affirmed Judge Wright's ruling in favor of the plaintiffs in the Davis (1961) case. While the ruling clearly stated that "race or color cannot be a factor entering into assignment of pupil under pupil placement law" (Davis v. East Baton Rouge Parish, 1961, p. 376), the ruling neither set any date for a desegregation plan to be submitted nor set a date for integration to begin ("Court of Appeals," 1961).

The Louisiana House of Representatives floor leader for Governor Jimmy Davis, the Honorable Risley Triche, pledged that the state would support local school districts in their efforts to maintain segregation in the face of the ruling. Triche ("Court of Appeals," 1961) said:

Consistent with school integration cases, we are willing to offer whatever assistance state government can to the parishes of East Baton Rouge and St. Helena. The administration never has been timid in taking action to prevent the destruction of our school system in this state. We do not intend to be timid facing the situation in East Baton Rouge and St. Helena parishes. (p. 10A)

Triche also suggested the possibility for a fifth special session of the legislature that year to deal with the situation. A statement from Representative John Garrett ("Court of Appeals, 1961) of Claiborne Parish expressed the goals of the legislative leadership

clearly when he said that the legislature “is going to work with these two parishes to help work out problems and formulate plans to maintain segregation” (p. 10A).

Two days latter, February 11, 1961, State Attorney General Jack Gremillion announced that the state was going to ask the Fifth Circuit to rehear the school desegregation cases in East Baton Rouge and St. Helena parishes (“State to Seek,” 1961). Gremillion said the appeal would be based on four pleas:

1. The court didn’t meet the issue squarely.
2. The court didn’t adequately consider the contentions of the defendants.
3. It is not right to consider the rights of the one group without considering the rights of another group.
4. The litigation cannot be judged in the light of the New Orleans school case since they differ in many respects. (p. 1A)

The language quoted in the Morning Advocate used by Baton Rouge District Attorney, Sargent Pitcher, was much stronger (“State to Seek,” 1961). Pitcher said the state should “redouble our efforts and continue the fight until we have defeated this vicious, un-Christian and un-American program of race mixing” (p. 1A). The Fifth Circuit did not agree to a rehearing, and on October 9, 1961, the U.S. Supreme Court rejected the state’s appeal of the February 9, ruling of the Court of Appeals (“Court Blocks,” 1961); however, the failure of the court to set specific time constraints allowed the state and the school districts an opportunity to postpone implementation of the desegregation order.

#### **Delay: The Delay of School Integration in East Baton Rouge Parish**

The federal courts had now made themselves explicitly clear in New Orleans and later in Baton Rouge that the public schools must desegregate. What was unclear was the amount of time before the integration would begin. Anti-desegregation efforts

became focused on efforts to prevent implementation of desegregation rulings as long as possible.

There is historical evidence of strong feelings about school desegregation in the East Baton Rouge Parish community. Race related events at the historically African American Southern University and community reaction reflect the feelings of the time. Students at Southern University affiliated with the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) were engaged in a strategy of direct non-violent confrontation to end segregation, including school segregation. These efforts both differed from and complimented the judicial remedies sought by the NAACP. During the week of December 11-15, 1961, CORE led a series of pickets and demonstrations against segregation in downtown Baton Rouge ("EBR Officials," 1961).

The first demonstrations resulted in East Baton Rouge District Attorney Sargent Pitcher issuing a warning to the demonstrators ("EBR Officials," 1961). Pitcher told the students that they would be "fully prosecuted" for criminal mischief if they continued to demonstrate. Specific charges would be for "obstructing public passage" and "disturbing the peace" (p.14A). Local citizens were advised to ignore the demonstrations, and local merchants were instructed on steps to insure successful prosecution of the demonstrators. Early the next morning, December 14, 1961, twenty-three members of CORE, including twenty-two Southern University students, were arrested and jailed for "obstruction of a public thoroughfare" ("Negro Pickets," 1961). That night, five-hundred students held a rally at Southern University to protest the arrests.

The arrests of the students did not end the downtown demonstrations. The following day, fifty more protestors were arrested and jailed during a demonstration at the Baton Rouge Parish jail of approximately 1,500 African Americans, most of them Southern University students ("50 Negroes," 1961). These individuals were arrested on charges of "conspiracy to commit criminal mischief" and "disturbing the peace." The problems occurred after the demonstrators refused to disperse when ordered and the police launched five tear gas grenades into the crowd ("50 Negroes," 1961).

Later on December 15, 1961, in response to the use of tear gas during the demonstrations, the city of Baton Rouge and the state of Louisiana sought court action to end the CORE demonstrations ("Federal, State Judiciary," 1961). That evening Judge West issued a restraining order against CORE from conducting further demonstrations. The restraining order was issued for ten days, and Judge West set January 4, 1962, as a date for hearings on a permanent injunction against CORE from holding any demonstrations ("Federal, State Judiciary," 1961). Felton G. Clark, President of Southern University, dismissed school for Christmas three days early and sent the students home, bringing a temporary end to the demonstrations ("Federal, State Judiciary, 1961).

Judge West extended the preliminary injunction against CORE for another 10 days following the hearings held on January 4, 1962 ("Judge Rules," 1962). Judge West also scheduled further hearings on a permanent injunction for January 11, 1962. The State Times claimed that much of the January 4 hearing was taken up by arguments from CORE that a three-judge panel should be convened for the hearing. Judge West

ruled against this motion, stating that the judge who originally heard the petition should decide the motion ("Judge Rules," 1962).

The hearings resumed on January 11, 1962; and the court heard witnesses including the mayor, an East Baton Rouge Parish deputy sheriff, and a television news photographer who testified that the crowd on December 15, 1961, was out of control and would not listen to instructions ("Witnesses Testify," 1962). The following day, local station WIRB news director, Jim Erwin, testified that there might have been violence had the police not used tear gas during the demonstrations on December 15, 1961 ("Cite Danger," 1962). The hearings were concluded on January 12, 1962, and Judge West gave attorneys for both sides additional time to file written arguments ("Judge is Studying," 1962).

In a related matter on the following Monday, an East Baton Rouge Parish Grand Jury began an investigation of charges filed by three individuals arrested during the December protests that they had been beaten while in the parish jail ("Jury Probes," 1962). East Baton Rouge Sheriff, Bryan Clemmons, denied the charges and called them a "cheap publicity stunt" ("Jury Probes," 1962).

During this week, issues related to the December demonstrations again flared up on the Southern University campus. Students began another round of protests following the announcement that eight students who had been among those arrested in December, had been expelled from the university ("Southern Closed," 1962). President Clark responded to the on-campus protests by announcing that Southern University was indefinitely closing as a response to "a continuous disturbance by a segment of students"

("Southern Closed," 1962, p. 1A). Southern students were also told that they would have to reapply for admission to the university and that none would be allowed to attend classes until reaccepted. When the university re-opened later in the week, many of the participants in the demonstrations were not re-admitted to the university ("Southern Closed," 1962).

Just prior to the end of 1961, the United States Justice Department for the first time became involved in the Davis case in support of the plaintiffs ("EBR and St. Helena," 1962). On behalf of the Justice Department, M. Hepburn Many filed a motion for summary judgment in the Davis (1961) and the Hall v. St. Helena Parish School Board (1961) school integration cases before Judge West ("EBR and St. Helena," 1962). Many told the court that there was an urgent need for action in light of the threats posed by Act 3 and Act 5 of the second special session of the Louisiana Legislature in 1961. This legislation made individuals informing on persons inducing others to send their children to integrated schools immune from prosecution and "made it a crime to intimidate or interfere in any way with the operation of segregation in public schools" ("EBR and St. Helena," 1962, p. 1A). Many's request specifically asked Judge West to immediately place in effect Judge Wright's 1960 ruling ordering integration. State Attorney General, Jack Gremillion warned the two school districts that the courts might order school integration for the beginning of the 1962 school year ("EBR and St. Helena, 1962, p. 8A).

The East Baton Rouge School Board was now faced with the imminent reality of having to integrate its schools in some form. Unfortunately, throughout 1961, the



school system was in a leadership crises ("Move is Afoot," 1961). This crises involved the unsuccessful effort by the East Baton Rouge School Board to remove Superintendent Lloyd V. Funchess the previous June because of his views on school integration. Members of the state legislature and the executive branch were unhappy with Funchess' reaction to the Fifth Circuit ruling (Davis, 1961) of February 1961 ("Plan Would," 1961). State strategy during the four previous special sessions that year was to promote the concept of "local option" schools which involved the closing of local public schools faced with court-ordered desegregation and replacing them with segregated state-supported private schools. Funchess and a majority of the school board opposed the closing of the public schools.

Governor Jimmy Davis called the Louisiana state legislature into a fifth special session (the previous four having attempted to avoid the court ordered desegregation in New Orleans) on Wednesday, February 13, 1961, following a meeting with segregation leaders in the legislature ("Davis Calls," 1961). On the second day of this session, Representative A. T. Sanders Jr. introduced an emergency bill allowing Governor Davis to "pack" the East Baton Rouge School Board with four additional members ("Plan Would," 1961). At the time, the school board consisted of seven members. The previous January, the board had voted four to three to appoint Superintendent Funchess to a new four-year term beginning July 1, 1961 ("Funchess Ouster," 1961). This vote corresponded to the views of the members on "local option." The board members supporting Funchess, including board president I. P. Collier, were either against school

closure or leaning against school closure in the face of mandatory integration ("Plan Would," 1961).

Sanders' bill was designed to change the vote on school closure from a probable four to three against, to a certain majority of at least seven to four in favor of closing the schools to avoid integration ("Plan Would," 1961). In addition, the emergency provision in the bill would allow Governor Davis to immediately appoint the new members and have them assume their duties at the time of appointment. Local citizens later would be allowed to elect members to these positions in the summer of 1962. The Louisiana House of Representatives voted to pass Sanders' bill seventy-nine to fourteen on Friday, February 18 ("House OK's," 1961). Following the vote, the East Baton Rouge School Board held a meeting and voted five to two to oppose the move by the legislature to add additional members to the board ("School Board," 1961).

The debate on the "board-packing" bill was longer in the Louisiana State Senate; however, after two long days of debate, the bill passed the Senate late on Sunday night February 19, 1961, by a vote of twenty-six to nine ("Board Approved," 1961). Members of the Senate denied the bill was related to public school integration and claimed that the purpose of the bill was to increase representation following the rapid growth of the district. The next day Governor Davis signed the bill along with nine other special sessions bills. Most legislators did little to hide the fact the objective of each of the five sessions was to preserve school segregation in the state ("Davis Signs," 1961). After signing the bill, under the emergency provisions, Davis appointed four new members to the East Baton Rouge School Board, including one who was active in

the White Citizens Council in Baton Rouge. These new members were sworn in at 5:00 p.m. February 20, 1961 ("Davis Names," 1961).

Just over three months later the "packed board" moved to change the leadership of the East Baton Rouge Parish School District. On May 31, 1961, three board members, including one of the new members, visited Superintendent Funchess and asked him to resign, claiming they had the necessary votes to change the vote of the previous January to renew his contract another four years ("Move is Afoot," 1961). Funchess refused to resign, and the matter came before the board during an emotionally charged meeting on June 8 ("Board Decides," 1961). A large crowd had gathered at the meeting, mostly in support of Funchess. The meeting began with a consideration of the issue of the renewal of the contract of the Superintendent. The board then heard from Funchess' attorney, Fred Benton Jr. Following Benton's remarks, the board voted six to five to rescind the January action that offered Funchess a contract extension. The original seven board members split five to two, including Board President Collier, in support of Funchess. The four new members appointed by Governor Davis were unanimous in favor of removing Funchess ("Board Decides," 1961).

The board considered several minor items of business following the vote on Funchess. A member of the audience then rose and requested an opportunity to speak on the matter of the superintendent ("Board Decides," 1961). Just as members of the audience were to be given an opportunity to speak, the meeting was interrupted. Collier announced to the crowd: "I have been told a bomb has been planted in the building. The meeting is adjourned" ("Board Decides," 1961, p. 1A). The board members then

left the room. Several of the board members who voted to oust Funchess issued statements claiming that their vote was based on unspecified concerns related to Funchess' handling of the budget. Funchess' stand on the issue of integration or on school closure was never mentioned as a reason for the action during June, 1961.

After voting to remove Funchess and replace him with Lloyd Lindsey, Principal at Baton Rouge Middle School, Funchess filed suit against the board and Lindsey. Funchess was successful in the suit, and the decision was upheld by the State Court of Appeals. Having lost the support of the school board, Funchess announced his resignation as school superintendent January 19, 1962 ("Funchess Will," 1962). The East Baton Rouge School Board appointed Lindsey as superintendent on January 25, by a vote of seven to four ("Board Names," 1962).

On the day prior to Lindsey's appointment as superintendent, the East Baton Rouge School District was given some additional time to prepare for school integration when Judge West postponed a hearing on the motion filed by Hepburn Many on December 31 ("School Case," 1962). The postponement was granted due to a request by the plaintiffs for a change of venue in the case from Baton Rouge to New Orleans. The defendants asks for more time to prepare an argument against the change in venue.

Both sides continued their legal maneuvering through the Spring of 1962. Eleven local attorneys filed a "Friend of the Court" brief asking Judge West to delay a decision on public school desegregation on March 9, pending the result of upcoming school board elections in July ("Attorneys Seek," 1962). Three days later, District Attorney, Sargent Pitcher, asked for a similar delay ("Delay is," 1962). Pitcher argued

that the court should “hold in abeyance for a reasonable time” any action on a petition from the NAACP asking that the district take active steps towards desegregation.

Reasons for this delay included a statement that the district should wait until a Black student expressed dissatisfaction with the school assigned, a claim that sixteen of the original twenty plaintiffs in the case had since withdrawn, and a claim that the NAACP motion would virtually bankrupt the school system.

The strategies and actions of both the plaintiffs in the Davis case and state and local officials were largely influenced by the court rulings regarding the New Orleans school system. On April 4, 1962, a key decision was handed down when Federal District Court Judge Wright ruled that beginning in the Fall of 1962, the first six grades of all public schools would be open to African American students (“U.S. Judge Orders,” 1962).

Judge Wright’s ruling threw out attempts by the state to limit desegregation through several “pupil placement laws” passed during special sessions of the legislature during the previous year (“U.S. Judge Rules,” 1962). Pupil placement laws allowed school boards to test students and assign them to public schools. The ruling was based on two points: the first was the fact the city of New Orleans operated a segregated dual system; and, the second was that the tests used to determine transfers were not given to all students (“U.S. Judge Rules,” 1962, p. 4A).

Judge Wright left the Federal Court for a position on the Court of Appeals for the District of Colombia, and another District Judge, Frank Ellis, granted a postponement on Judge Wright’s April 4, decision on May 1, 1962 (“Orleans School,”

1962). Three weeks later, Judge Ellis, modified the original order ("Desegregation Order," 1962). Citing the magnitude of the administrative problem of allowing every student in the district an opportunity to attend the school of his/her choice, Judge Ellis ordered the New Orleans School Board to apply Judge Wright's order only to first grade students in the Fall of 1962 ("Desegregation Order," 1962). Then, beginning with the second grade in 1963, the board was instructed to desegregate a grade level each year until the dual school system was eliminated. A modified version of this plan would later be adopted by East Baton Rouge Parish ("Judge Orders EBR," 1963).

July, 1962, also marked the first school board election in Baton Rouge following the "stacking" of the board by the governor and state legislature and the resignation of Superintendent Funchess. Three of the four members appointed by Governor Davis under the emergency legislation the prior year were running for regular election ("Terse Comments," 1962). Two of the three were eliminated during the primary election on July 28, 1962 and one entered a runoff ("5 School," 1962).

After the election, local NAACP leader, Reverend Arthur Jelks, continued his efforts to push the desegregation issue forward. Reverend Jelks sent a letter to the East Baton Rouge Parish School Board on August 8, 1962, asking the board to begin peaceful integration of schools when they opened in the coming fall ("School Board Indicates," 1962). The school system responded that it would take no action until the courts issued a ruling on the matter. The Federal Court had not yet ruled on the motion for a delay submitted by the local district attorney the previous March ("School Board Indicates," 1962).

Following the denial of his request, Reverend Jelks filled out an application for his daughter to attend the all White Baton Rouge Junior High ("Local NAACP," 1962). Jelks was refused by the district and told his daughter would have to attend the all Black Capitol Middle School. Jelks then attempted to bring his daughter to Baton Rouge Middle School and enroll her in the school. Jelks followed this rejection with a statement that because his daughter was denied admission to the school because of her race, it was an unconstitutional act. He then warned the school board that he might file a law suit ("Local NAACP," 1962).

Several days after Reverend Jelks' failure to enroll his daughter in Baton Rouge Middle School, he announced that he would lead a mass demonstration and attempt to enroll Black students in at least five schools when they opened on September 4 ("NAACP Chief," 1962). Jelks followed through with this effort, and on the first day of school, seven Black students attempted to enroll in White schools ("Crowd Jeers," 1962). When the group arrived at Baton Rouge Middle School to attempt to enroll, they were met by a crowd of about one-hundred-twenty-five Whites who shouted insults at Jelks, the students and their parents. Also on hand during the effort were four investigators from the State Sovereignty Commission ("NAACP Chief," 1962).

Two days later, Reverend Jelks was indicted by an East Baton Rouge Parish Grand Jury for defaming State District Judge Fred A. Blanche Jr. and District Attorney Sargent Pitcher during a mass meeting following the attempts to enroll the seven students ("Negro Ministers," 1962). Reverend Elton Cox, leader of the CORE demonstrations the previous December, was also indicted. A warrant was issued for

both leaders, and bond was set at \$5000 for each offense. The indictments were based on the testimony of several news reporters covering the meeting. Jelks was arrested the following Monday on his way to the courthouse to turn himself in and was later released after posting \$10,000 bond ("Jelks is Free," 1962).

Beginning in 1963, the issue of federal aid to education emerged in the effort to prevent school integration. Many officials and school leaders continued to believe that by refusing federal funds the state and the school districts could limit federal influence. Beginning in 1961, the official envelopes for the East Baton Rouge Parish School System contained the following phrase in quotations: "Say no to Federal Aid and Control of Education" ("\$15.1 Million," 1963). The slogan became the source of a heated debate during an East Baton Rouge School Board meeting on January 3, 1963. Some members felt the board was being hypocritical by using the slogan while they continued to accept aid. After some discussion, the board agreed to continue to accept the aid on the grounds that it would hurt students to refuse it; however, the slogan was left on the envelopes in the hope that it still might do some good. Later in the month, State Attorney General Jack Gremillion said that federal aid to education was immaterial to federal efforts to integrate schools ("Gremillion Says," 1963). Six months later, the board rejected a motion five to five by board member John White for the school system to refuse all federal funds ("School Budget OK," 1963). The slogan, however, remained on the school system envelopes until the school board voted six to five to remove it during a regular meeting on November 14, 1963 ("School Board Drops, 1963).



On February 13, 1963, Judge West finally scheduled hearings in the Davis case for March 1, 1963 ("Judge Sets," 1963). Judge West's action was a result of a request by five attorneys, including A. P. Tureaud of New Orleans and Johnny Jones of Baton Rouge. The motion emphasized that Judge West had not issued any order requiring the board to prepare a desegregation plan.

Efforts of the East Baton Rouge School System to delay the Fifth Circuit Court ruling ordering desegregation suffered a severe blow following the March 1, 1963, hearing before Judge West ("Desegregation Plan for," 1963). Judge West ordered the East Baton Rouge School Board to prepare a plan for desegregation of the parish public schools in compliance with all previous Federal, Fifth Circuit, and Supreme Court rulings. In the text of the ruling, Judge West made it clear he did not agree with the desegregation of public schools:

I could not, in good conscience, pass upon this matter today without first making it clear, for the record, that I personally regard the 1954 ruling of the United States Supreme Court in the now famous Brown case as one of the truly regrettable decisions of all times. Its substitution of the so-called "sociological principles" for sound legal reasoning was almost unbelievable. As far as I can see, its only real accomplishment to date has been to bring discontent and chaos to many previously peaceful communities, without bringing any real attendant benefits to anyone. And even more regrettable to me is the fact that almost without exception the trouble that has directly resulted from this decision in other communities has been brought about not by the community involved, but by the agitation of outsiders, from far distant states, who, after having created turmoil and strife in one locality, are ready to move on to meddle in the affairs of others elsewhere. (pp. 1A, 8A)

West called a meeting with both sides four days later to set a date for submission of the plan.

Judge West, following the meeting of March 5, 1963, ordered the district to submit a desegregation plan to the court prior to July 5, 1963 ("Desegregation Plan Deadline," 1963). West also ordered the defendants in the case not to interfere in the orderly preparation or implementation of the plan. Lawyers for the NAACP, during the meeting, issued their own plan. The NAACP plan called for integration to be achieved at a rate of three grades a year beginning in the fall of 1963, abolishing the existing dual schools zones, integration of teachers along with students, and integration of all school-sponsored extra curricular activities ("Desegregation Plan Deadline," 1963).

The East Baton Rouge School Board began complying with Judge West's orders at its regularly scheduled meeting two days later ("Board Members, 1963). Board member, J. Randall Goodwin, presented a motion instructing the school district staff to begin development of a desegregation plan with the following preface: "Not one member of this board wants to see this system integrated but regardless of our personal feelings we have a mandate from the federal court" (p. 1A). John White Jr., another board member, came out against the motion and issued a prepared statement:

It is now certain that the East Baton Rouge Parish school system will be racially integrated. No power on earth can prevent it, and many powers on earth insist upon it. There is one last clear choice left to the school board: Whether or not we will submit a plan of integration to the federal court. The board's legal counsel has advised that we can decline to submit a plan of integration and face no penalty of contempt of court. No member of this board is therefore compelled by law to vote for a plan of integration. Under these circumstances, I believe the board should decline to submit a plan of integration, because to do so would constitute a voluntary sponsorship of what will follow. We do not know what will follow, but experience in other integrated school systems and the opinion of educators concur in supporting the prediction that education will be impaired. (pp. 1A, 4A)

The board voted nine to two in favor of Goodwin's motion instructing the district staff to begin preparing a desegregation plan. The following day, Superintendent Lloyd Lindsey announced that the school district staff had begun exploratory work and was preparing a plan ("Desegregation Study," 1963). The action of the board was given a nod of community support when a "declaration" signed by over four-hundred residents of Baton Rouge was accepted "for the record" by the school board during its regular meeting on April 3, 1963 ("School Integration," 1963). The "declaration" stated that public education must be preserved, law and order must be maintained, the right of parents to send their children to private schools must be recognized, and a private school system cannot become an adequate substitute for the public school system (p. 1A). Two weeks later, segregationists presented a petition against school desegregation signed by over eight-hundred Baton Rouge residents ("Signers of Petition," 1963).

Intimidation of local integration leaders did not let up after Judge West ruling. Local NAACP leader, Reverend Jelks, was arrested and jailed on his way to an NAACP meeting late in the day on April 5, 1963, a Friday ("BR Integration," 1963). The charge was "contempt of court" for failing to answer a traffic citation resulting from an accusation that he passed at an intersection. Because Jelks was jailed late on a Friday afternoon, he remained in jail until Monday before he could appear in front of a judge.

Despite the harassment, Reverend Jelks continued to pressure the school system and the courts to speed up school integration. The school board sent school assignment forms home with each school student in early May, 1963 ("Negroes Urged," 1963). These forms allowed parents to object to school assignments based on boundaries

established by the board the previous February. Jelks, in his capacity as president of the local NAACP, urged parents not to sign the form and warned that signing the form would be seen as an agreement with present segregation plan. Jelks asked that parents wait until the federal courts and NAACP attorneys agreed upon a plan. During the next school board meeting, a group of Black religious and political leaders, including Reverend Jelks, delivered a formal letter to the board protesting the card "assignment plan" implemented by the school district ("Negroes Ask," 1963). On advice of the school board attorney, the board agreed to accept the letter, filed it, and authorized the superintendent to take whatever action he deemed fit.

The East Baton Rouge School Board accepted and released the desegregation plan ordered by Judge West during its regularly scheduled meeting on June 27, 1963 ("School Board Would," 1963). The plan, accepted by a vote of seven to four, agreed to begin in the fall of 1964, and set the twelfth grade as the starting point. Desegregation would then proceed downward through the grades at the rate of one grade per year. The plan also established a list of sixteen rules for placement of students in parish high schools. All existing school assignments were to be maintained, and the superintendent was given the right to interview any child or his/her parent or guardian wishing to transfer to a different school. The school board then agreed to file a motion with the federal court asking acceptance of the mixing plan ("Motion to Accept," 1963).

Several days later the Forth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals dealt the proponents of local option school closure and parental-choice a severe blow by barring Powhatan County, Virginia, school officials from closing schools to avoid integration ("Federal

Appeals,” 1963). The same court also struck down a plan proposed by Lynchburg, Virginia, similar to the one just presented by the East Baton Rouge School Board. The Fourth Circuit rejected a grade-a-year and minority transfer provision of the Lynchburg desegregation plan.

The NAACP in Baton Rouge announced its opposition to the school board plan and filed a protest in U.S. District Court on July 8, 1963 (“NAACP is Protesting,” 1963). The three reasons for the protest cited by the NAACP included the delay until 1964, the grade-a-year provision, and the cumbersome obstacles placed in the administration of the plan. Following the protest, Judge West scheduled a meeting for Monday, July 15, with attorneys for both sides to discuss the plan (“Judge Sets Conference,” 1963). Judge West said he would file an opinion “in the near future” on desegregation plans for East Baton Rouge following the private meeting on July 15 (“Judge to File,” 1963, pp. 1A, 8A).

Two days later, Judge West filed his opinion (“Judge Orders EBR,” 1963). Judge West accepted the school board plan with the exception that twelfth grade students would be eligible to apply for a transfer to any school they chose for the school year beginning in the fall of 1963. The school system was ordered to send a letter to all twelfth grade students, regardless of race, advising them that they might apply for a reassignment to another school of their choice. The school system was also told not to deny reasonable requests. Judge West’s ruling effectively ended efforts by segregationists to delay the inevitable integration of public schools. For the next seven years, however, the number of Black students attending school with White students in

East Baton Rouge remained small. This was largely a result of efforts by segregationists to dilute school desegregation in the community.

**Dilute: The Dilution of School Desegregation in East Baton Rouge**

The new school year in the fall of 1963 would mark the beginning of some desegregation in East Baton Rouge Public Schools; however, it soon became clear that the numbers would be extremely limited. The night after Judge West issued his ruling the school board voted to accept the plan calling for integration of the twelfth grade in the fall ("Integration Plan," 1963). Sargent Pitcher, attorney for the school board, read a remarkable statement at the meeting. The entire text is presented as an example of passionate defense of segregationist values. Pitcher ("Integration Plan," 1963) stated:

I am sure that the people of this parish know that I have never been nor am I now in favor of school integration. I am and have been bitterly opposed to forced integration in any form. It is apparent, now, however, that the wishes of the majority of the people of the South are of no moment in the eyes of the present federal administration. Notwithstanding the desires of the majority of the people of this community, the school board was ordered to produce a plan for integration of the schools under the Brown decision, and experience has taught us that unless the school board complied, we would have forced integration at the point of federal bayonets. After much hard work and diligent effort the school board submitted a plan to Judge West on June 28, 1963. The plan submitted was, in the opinion of the majority membership of the board, the best that they could do. Judge West yesterday approved that plan with certain modifications. It is with regret and foreboding that I make this statement. Integration will begin in the East Baton Rouge Parish schools this fall at the 12<sup>th</sup> grade level. Eligible Negro pupils in the 12<sup>th</sup> grade requesting permission to attend a white school near their home will be granted that permission, provided they meet the criteria set forth in the plan filed by Judge West yesterday. The reason that I am so bitterly opposed to forced integration is that I believe in the freedom of choice of association. Our only hope is for a change in public opinion throughout this country which will necessarily bring about a change in administration. It is my earnest conviction that this

sociological experiment of integration is a costly error. When the people throughout the country realize and reap the results of the holocaust brought on by forced integration, I am convinced that the U.S. Supreme will be forced to reverse their obnoxious and unconstitutional decision and once again return to the constitutional principles announced in Plessy Vs. Ferguson, and the Negro and white races will again be able to live in peace in the South. Until that time comes, however, we must do the best we can. The plan for integration of the schools handed down by Judge West is for integration this fall at the 12<sup>th</sup> grade level and one grade a year thereafter starting from the 12<sup>th</sup> grade on down. I would like the people of this parish to know that we have fought this proposition since 1956. The die is now cast. I know that the people of this parish will react as they have in the past—in a reasonable and sensible manner. I don't feel that anyone could benefit by another, Little Rock, Oxford, Cambridge or Washington, D. C. The next move is up to the people of the parish. Those who do not want to send their children to integrated schools should organize and establish private schools. In fact, one such school is already in operation. The Foundation School has successfully completed its first year in operation. The grant-in-aid funds are available and ready for the people of this parish. It is my earnest hope that there can be an orderly transition for those who desire it from the public school system to a private one. Our forefathers lived through and defeated Reconstruction. I am confident that our people can live through and defeat integration. (p. 8A)

Clearly, the desegregation of the public schools beginning in the Fall of 1963 was done against the wishes of some public officials.

A split developed in the NAACP over how to respond to the new plan ("Integration Plan," 1963). Lead council for the NAACP, A. P. Tureaud of New Orleans, agreed to accept the plan without further appeal. Reverend Jelks, on the other hand, issued a request to the national office of the NAACP asking that the plan be appealed.

The Sunday Advocate editorialized on the plan. ("The Desegregation," 1963).

The paper urged the community to accept the plan and focus on education:

(T)he most important consideration is that the schools must not be distracted from their vitally important task of giving the young people of the community the best possible education under the best conditions that can be maintained. When this happens, it is the young and the future that suffers the most. (p. 3B)

The prevailing public opinion during the summer of 1963 was a reluctant acceptance of the inevitability of school desegregation combined with a strong desire to make the change peacefully and lawfully. Later in the summer, the Catholic school system in Baton Rouge announced its own plan to desegregate beginning in the fall of 1964 ("EBR Parish Catholic," 1963).

The East Baton Rouge School Board met in executive session on August 8, 1963, to determine the specific process for admitting Black students to White schools ("Lindsey to Assign," 1963). Thirty-eight Black students applied for transfer to White schools prior to the deadline established by Judge West. The board instructed the superintendent to assign the Black students to White schools. Additionally, the board stipulated that the thirty-eight students must pass screening for academic competency and adaptability to a new environment. Specifically, the screening involved sixteen specific qualifications. The board agreed to notify the students in writing prior to August 21, of the disposition of their requests. Students wishing to appeal a denial of permission to transfer would be given until August 27, to file an objection. The board said that a majority of the applicants were females living in South Baton Rouge wishing to attend Baton Rouge High School ("Lindsey to Assign, 1963).

On Thursday August 22, the school board released the names of twenty-eight Black students who were accepted to transfer to White schools ("Negro School," 1963).



The next day, the accepted students were notified in the Morning Advocate that they must report to the school board office that day and confirm their acceptance of the assignment made. All twenty-eight students went to the school board office and accepted their assignments ("28 Negro Pupils," 1963). The next week, all twenty-eight Black students registered at four previously all White high schools ("28 Negro Transferees," 1963).

Schools opened in East Baton Rouge on Tuesday, September 3, 1963. Prior to the opening, there is evidence of uneasiness in the community. On Sunday, September 1, Church leaders across the community prayed for peace and calm ("Appeal Made," 1963). Bishop Robert E. Tracy of the diocese of Baton Rouge released a special message:

I appeal to all members of the Catholic family in Christ to provide right-minded leadership in our community, as our school board goes about its duty of carrying out the legitimate directives of the U.S. District Court.  
(p. 1A)

Protestant leaders in the community issued similar appeals from the pulpit. School officials asked all parents in the community to stay away from schools during the first week of class (EBR Schools Desegregate, 1963). It was also announced that of the twenty-eight Black students attending formerly all White high schools, fourteen would be at Baton Rouge High, six at Glen Oaks High, four at Istrouma High, and four at Robert E. Lee High.

The first day of classes for the twenty-eight Black students attending previously all White high schools was without incident ("No Major," 1963). All twenty-eight

Black students attended the first day of class. The students were transported to the schools in taxi cabs paid by the school district. Before the students arrived, the White students at each of the four high schools were called into assemblies and addressed by their principals. Police officers and Federal Bureau of Investigation agents observed the students and the schools. The Morning Advocate ("No Major," 1963, p. 1A) reported that White students ignored the new Black students.

There were some problems ("No Major," 1963). A charred cross was found and removed at Glen Oaks High School. A few protesters at some of the schools were told by officials to go home. There was also a bomb threat at Istrouma High School that was ignored because the school had been under guard the previous night. School officials complimented the behavior of students and parents for making the first day of school integration in East Baton Rouge go smoothly ("Trouble-Free," 1963). Later in the week, the school board announced that a total of 51,646 students had enrolled in district schools for the school year ("EBR School Enrollment, 1963). This number was up 1,700 students from the previous year, but one-thousand less than expected. The school district made no comment on the reason for the lower than expected enrollment. The report indicated that 31,128 White students and 20,343 Black students were in school. Thus, the new school integration involved less than 0.012% of Black students in the district entering "White schools."

The following spring, in May 1964, the school board announced that sixty-one applications from African American students wishing to attend White high schools had

been accepted ("Transfer of 61," 1964). Superintendent Lloyd Lindsey reported that one-hundred-four Black students had applied to attend eleventh or twelfth grade at White schools for the second year of desegregation. Forty-six were rejected because of low academic qualifications or failure to apply in their own districts ("Transfer of 61," 1964). When school started in the fall of 1964, fifty-seven African American students enrolled in White high schools ("EBR Public Schools," 1964). The Morning Advocate ("EBR Public Schools," 1964) reported that thirty-five Black students enrolled in Baton Rouge High, two at Istrouma High, twelve at Glen Oaks High, and nine at Lee High School. The opening of school in the fall of 1964 was quiet with no reported problems ("School Integration is," 1964).

In December 1964, Superintendent Lloyd Lindsey announced that he would not seek a new contract when his term expired on June 30, 1965 ("School Post," 1965). Lindsey also asked for a six month leave prior to his departure. As a result, Robert Aertker was appointed acting Superintendent on January, 4, 1965 ("School Post," 1965). The next Saturday, January 9, 1965, Aertker was selected to replace Lindsey as Superintendent of East Baton Rouge Parish Schools on July 1, 1965 ("R. Aertker," 1965).

During the summer of 1965, the NAACP petitioned the federal court to speed up desegregation in East Baton Rouge Parish ("Compliance Request," 1965). Judge West scheduled a hearing for June 2, 1965. Following the hearing, Judge West ordered all public school grades in East Baton Rouge to be integrated by the fall of 1968 ("Schools to Finish," 1965). Judge West also ordered the district to add the first and second

grades to the tenth, eleventh and twelfth grades previously scheduled to integrate in the fall of 1965. A request by the plaintiffs for integration of teachers and other staff members was denied by Judge West. Judge West, however, did order an end to the district's screening of Black students requesting transfer to White schools ("Schools to Finish," 1965). This important ruling by Judge West was a clear and strong endorsement of the principles of "freedom of choice" desegregation.

As a result of Judge West's ruling on June 2, 1965, Robert Aertker announced on July 20, 1965, that all students in the effected grades must register at the school they wished to attend ("All Students," 1965). It was stated that schools would be filled on a first come, first serve basis. The East Baton Rouge School System reported at the beginning of the 1965 school year that thirty-three Black students registered at previously all White elementary schools and one-hundred-twenty-five Black students registered for the tenth, eleventh and twelfth grades in predominantly White high schools ("Schools are Opened," 1965). After three years of school desegregation, less than two percent of African American students in East Baton Rouge Parish Public Schools were attending school with White children.

Baton Rouge was similar to many cities across the South, and on December 29, 1966, the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals said, "Enough" ("Strict Pattern," 1966). The Jefferson I decision forbade all efforts at "token" desegregation and mandated guidelines for desegregation set up by the Department of Health, Education and Welfare. Key among these guidelines were requirements to integrate faculties and school busses (U.S. v. Jefferson, 1966). The ruling was issued by a two to one decision

("Strict Pattern," 1966). Three months later the full Fifth Circuit endorsed the Jefferson I decision in the Jefferson II decision by a margin of eight to four. Also, the appeals court added East Baton Rouge Parish to the list of defendants in the Jefferson II ruling.

On April 5, 1967, the states of Louisiana and Alabama appealed the Jefferson I & II decisions to the U.S. Supreme Court ("Mixing Order," 1967). The following week, the East Baton Rouge School Board responded to the Jefferson II ruling during its regularly scheduled meeting on April 13, 1967 ("Class Integration," 1967). The board agreed to prepare for the integration of all grades in the fall of 1967; however, the school board's attorney was instructed to "keep fighting to obtain a stay order against the desegregation decision" ("Class Integration," 1967, p. 1A.). The board did not discuss the issue of faculty integration at the meeting ("Class Integration," 1967). On October 9, 1967, the U.S. Supreme Court refused a rehearing of the Jefferson I & II decision. Louisiana Attorney General Jack Gremillion commented that, "This is the end to the matter, there's no possibility of a rehearing" ("Schools Rehearing," 1967, 1A).

Approximately seven-hundred-fifty African American students attended predominantly White schools in the fall of 1967. The elimination of all grade and eligibility requirements from the "grade-a-year" plan resulted in the new plan being labeled the "freedom of choice" plan ("Judge West," 1970). The "freedom of choice" plan also allowed for voluntary desegregation of school faculties. The East Baton Rouge Schools System, however, remained a dual system with Black and White supervisors, extra curricular activities, bussing, and administrations. In addition, all

schools retained their designation as either White or Black schools. ("School Rehearing," 1967).

The number of African American students enrolling in White schools under the "freedom of choice" plan doubled at the beginning of the next school year in the fall of 1968 to 1500 ("Integration Exceeds," 1970). The following year, in the fall of 1969, the number of African American students doubled again to nearly 3,000. The NAACP and the Justice Department, however, maintained objections to the "freedom of choice" plan because of the slow pace of change and the continuation of a "dual" school system. The Jefferson II decision required all school districts to be "unitary."

On January 16, 1970, Judge West ordered East Baton Rouge Parish to develop a plan for implementation in the fall of 1970 to change the East Baton Rouge Parish School System to a "unitary" school system (Judge West, 1970). The federal court ordered the school system's plan to include complete integration of students, faculty, administration, extra curricular activities, and bussing ("Judge West, 1970). The following school board meeting, on January 21, 1970, the board named a nineteen member biracial committee charged with, first, defining "unitary school system," and second, developing a plan to achieve a "unitary school system" ("New Subcommittee," 1970). Donald Hoover, interviewed for the oral history portion of this study, was selected as a member of the committee (Hoover, 1998).

The East Baton Rouge Parish School Board announced its redistricting plans to comply with Judge West's order on May 14, 1970 ("School Unit," 1970). The school system staff prepared the boundaries to maximize integration while maintaining the

concept of "neighborhood schools" ("School Unit," 1970). By the middle of July, 1970, the entire plan for establishing a "unitary" school system was approved by the board and submitted to Judge West ("Judge West," 1970). Judge West approved the plan including the cross-over teacher plan developed by the biracial committee with no changes. Judge West ("Judge West," 1970) issued the following statement: "The good faith, and success of the school board in the field of endeavor is underscored by the fact this school system has not been before this court since 1966" (p. 1A).

The following week on July 29, 1970, the East Baton Rouge Parish School issued a statement estimating that for the upcoming year 18,465 out of 23,053 Black students in the district would be attending school with White students ("Integration Exceeds," 1970). This resulted in a level of African American desegregation of eighty percent. In addition, faculties at every school would be nearly sixty-five percent White and thirty-five percent Black ("Integration Exceeds," 1970). Prior to the beginning of the 1970 school year, on August 21, 1970, the East Baton Rouge Parish School System announced that it would be holding a five day "orientation of teachers" at LSU for six-hundred cross-over teachers in the district ("EBR School System," 1970).

The "orientation of teachers" event at LSU marks the end of the contextual background presented for this study. It certainly does not mark the end of the struggle for desegregation in the East Baton Rouge public schools. The school district remains today embroiled in the desegregation case and continues to try and find ways to achieve the goal of an "unitary" school system. Beginning in August, 1970; however, a new chapter dawned in East Baton Rouge public schools. This school year is the focus of

the oral history examination of the cross-over. Chapter Four, details the narratives of two teachers in East Baton Rouge Parish who participated in the 1970 cross-over.



## **Chapter Four**

### **Narratives of Teachers' Experiences During Desegregation and the Cross-Over**

#### **Introduction**

The East Baton Rouge School System held a five day orientation seminar at LSU on desegregation prior to the beginning of the school year in 1970. This was the year of the massive student and teacher cross-over in the district. Over six hundred teachers and administrators attended. Five of the educators interviewed for this study attended this seminar. This seminar, more than any other event, marks a milestone in the history of the East Baton Rouge School System. The seminar was the staging ground for first year of forced integration of teachers and students in East Baton Rouge Parish Public Schools.

The present chapter highlights the experiences through oral narrative of two cross-over teachers who taught in the East Baton Rouge School System during the first year of district-wide cross-over. Both teachers are currently working in the school system. The narratives of these two teachers are used as a means for a detailed comparison and contrasting of an African American male who crossed over into a White school, and a White female who crossed over into an African American school.

What follows are two stories out of thousands that could be told. No claim is made here that they are in any way more significant tales than those that could be told by other individuals involved in desegregation or the cross-over. A claim is made that these individuals are representative and typical of cross-over teachers who taught in the East Baton Rouge School System during desegregation. Both teachers have long

teaching careers in the district, were willing to discuss their experiences openly, expressed trust in the fair reporting of their narratives, and wished to contribute to and support this research project.

Both teachers were selected based on their ability to speak to the research questions. In addition, the desire to limit the number of interviewees makes it impossible to cover even a small portion of the many experiences of teachers during desegregation and the cross-over. Rather than a range of levels -- elementary, middle, secondary -- and a large number of subjects, contextual similarity and a limited number of subjects provides a link between the narratives that is useful in exploring meaning. The purpose here is to examine the recalled experiences of two typical cross-over teachers in as much specific detail and depth as possible as we seek to understand urban desegregation in a mid-sized southern city.

The stories of the two teachers will be told using their own words. Each story will begin with a brief biographical sketch of the individual, followed by a description of the school context in which the individual worked and taught during the cross-over phase. Included in this description are brief histories of the schools in which the respondents worked. The narratives are gathered under a set of common themes for comparison purposes and include the interviewee's early thoughts and perceptions of the cross-over, prior preparation for the cross-over, experiences during the first few days of the cross-over, relations with school administrators, relations with students, relations with other teachers, reaction of family and friends, experiences in the Baton Rouge

community, thoughts on the advantages and disadvantages of the cross-over, and current thoughts on the long term efforts to integrate East Baton Rouge Public Schools.

**Freddie Millican**

Mr. Freddie Millican is an African American who has been teaching in the East Baton Rouge School System since 1965. During his thirty-three years in the school system, Mr. Millican has taught English at McKinley High School and at Istrouma High School (Millican 1999a, 1999b). Currently, he is the Dean of Students at Broadmoor Middle School. Mr. Millican was born and raised in East Baton Rouge Parish in the town of Zachary, Louisiana, ten miles north of Baton Rouge. He attended the now closed Northwestern High School, graduating in 1957. After completing high school, Mr. Millican attended Southern University in Baton Rouge, spent several years in the military, then returned to Southern University, where in 1965 he graduated with a degree in education. Mr. Millican went to college and became a teacher as a way out of a life of common laborer. According to Mr. Millican (1999a), a love of learning and respect for teachers combined with a lack of opportunities for educated African Americans made teaching an easy career choice:

Back in 1957 when I graduated, and in 1956-55, when I was in high school, I would imagine that there really wasn't a great deal of experiences that I could have gone into. Many of the plants like Exxon, and the other corporations, they were beginning to downsize. A lot of people were working at those plants, but they were doing basically common labor. I saw teaching as a way of earning a living without having to do common labor, and that is probably one of the reasons I went into teaching. Then, I always enjoyed school, and being around school, and some of my role models were teachers. Some of the people I knew were teachers. Probably that was my motivation for becoming a teacher.

Upon completing his degree at Southern University, Mr. Millican began his professional career as an educator. Mr. Millican's first teaching job was as an English teacher at McKinley High School, formerly known as the McKinley Colored High School. McKinley, opened in 1924 and was one of the first African American High Schools in the South. The school had earned a reputation by 1965 for being a high quality school. The reputation of McKinley High School was such that it not only served students from East Baton Rouge Parish, but also from all across the state of Louisiana. The original school house built on the corner of East Boulevard and Louise Street later became a middle school and then an elementary school. During the time Mr. Millican taught there, McKinley High School was housed in a new building. Finished in 1961, the same McKinley High School facility is still in use today. McKinley High School remained a school with all African American students up until the 1970 cross-over. However, Mr. Millican recalls that there were two White teachers at the school prior to 1970.

Mr. Millican speaks with pride about his being given the opportunity to teach at McKinley High School. In addition, Mr. Millican (1999a) reflects on an attitude that reflects a culture of excellence at McKinley High School:

Most of my older sisters and brothers and people I know went to McKinley. I was proud to be an instructor at McKinley -- proud of the tradition that McKinley had and proud to be down there. I enjoyed my five years at McKinley. Of course, it was a school where everybody was one race. All of us were Black, and all of the students were Black. And I will tell you what, back in those days there was a sort of motivation among the teachers to strive for excellence in all of the academics. In other words, we realized on the faculty at McKinley that we had young boys and young girls that had to go out and compete among a whole

different nationality of people -- the whole mirage of American society. We tried to instill in these people the idea that because they were in a school like McKinley, because they were in a one race school, that we had to run faster. And so, we taught hard, and we stayed on them academically, trying to produce an excellent product, a top rated student when they graduated from high school. This was our motivation at McKinley, and I enjoyed that.

Mr. Millican taught at McKinley for five years before he was selected to be one of the cross-over teachers. He was not asked if he wanted to be transferred to a different school. He was given a form and told to list in order of preference the three White high schools where he would like to teach.

Because of the demographics of the East Baton Rouge School System, African American schools lost a much higher percent (65%) of their faculties than the White schools (35%). This policy was developed by the biracial committee and approved by the courts; however, from his comments it is clear that Mr. Millican, as well as many members of the African American community, were unaware of the reasons. A common feeling was that the policy was a deliberate attempt to destroy historically African American schools. Mr. Millican (1999a) explains:

There were many ideas being passed among the people and the teachers back in those days. Some thought that they were robbing the Black schools of all of the excellent teachers. That was the prevailing idea, that they would get all of the good teachers out of the schools like McKinley and Capitol and Northwestern and send them to the White schools. So that was one idea that people said -- that our schools would be robbed of all the talent.

When asked if he thought there might be some truth to the notion that desegregation was robbing the black schools of their excellent teachers, Mr. Millican responded:

"Could be, yeah, yeah. There very well could have been." Mr. Millican was certain, however, that the African American schools lost many excellent teachers.

Mr. Millican (1999a) believes that school desegregation was necessary and a good thing. However, he expressed some anxiety: "We didn't know where we were going or what school you would end up at, or whether you were going to some hostile environment where you probably would face firing in six weeks." Regardless of the apprehension felt by many African American teachers, Mr. Millican (1999a) claims that most teachers did want to break the racial segregation of schools:

We looked at integration as something new and something that we wanted, and I guess that it was a challenge to us. We knew we were going into new schools, that we were going into better schools. All of us had always heard that the grass was greener on the other side. We grew up in Baton Rouge hearing about Istrouma High, and Baton Rouge High, and Broadmoor High, and all of these schools. We would pass the stadium back in the old days of segregation when the stadium had fifteen to twenty-thousand people in it from Baton Rouge High. We knew they were living the good life in sports, and the good life in academics, and the good life in education. And so we looked forward to going over and being a part of that. So, I don't know of anybody who looked back and said "We don't want to go." Most people wanted to go and wanted to be a part of this new experience in Baton Rouge.

Before the end of the school year in 1970, Mr. Millican was told he would be teaching that autumn at Istrouma High School.

Along with Baton Rouge High School, Istrouma was the pride of the East Baton Rouge School System. Istrouma High School was a model facility. The gymnasium was the largest in the school system. The school included a two-thousand-seat state-of-the-art auditorium. Istrouma High School had a reputation of academic and athletic excellence that was statewide, and even nationwide.

Mr. Millican attended the orientation seminar at LSU just prior to crossing over to Istrouma High School (Millican, 1999b). He remembers it as "like a pep rally." The remarkable aspect of the event for Mr. Millican was that it allowed White and Black teachers in Baton Rouge to meet and talk together for the first time in a large professional gathering. It was an exciting time for both Black and White teachers, according to Mr. Millican.

Mr. Millican still recalls his first day as a teacher at Istrouma High School. His recollection of meeting with the principal on that day is remarkable because it illustrates deeply held attitudes about race. Mr. Millican (1999a) remembers that attitudes of cross-over teachers were abruptly confronted by school officials:

Yeah, I can remember the very first day that I went to Istrouma High School. The principal then was "Little Fuzzy" Brown. You have probably heard of him. "Little Fuzzy" was the principal at Istrouma then; and I went in, and I sat behind this big huge desk. "Little Fuzz" was sitting behind the desk, and he said, "Hello, where you coming from?" I said, "I am coming from McKinley." He said, "You're coming from McKinley?" And his next remark was, "You all think you are better than us over there." That was his remark, "You all think you are better than us over there." And I swear I was surprised as I don't know what to hear him make that remark. You know, to say that, here we had admired Istrouma and admired all of these other schools, and here he is one of the top administrators in the Baton Rouge area saying that we think that we are better than they are.

Although this remark clearly seems to be intended as an effort of dominance and control by his new principal, Mr. Millican searches for other explanations.

What emerges is a discussion of the qualities of McKinley High School. Mr. Millican ponders why the principal might think that people from McKinley would think

themselves superior. This concern is revealed by Mr. Millican (1999a) during a further discussion of the quality and reputation of McKinley:

You know, my being raised in Zachary, in the country like, I didn't realize how important McKinley was. But McKinley is one of the top-notch schools I learned later in the whole state of Louisiana and in the nation. And not only blacks, but whites looked up to McKinley too. That is probably why he made that remark -- that we thought we were better than them over there. So, when "Little Fuzz" made that remark, I really was surprised. But then I looked back at McKinley, and I realized how many of the teachers at McKinley, even though they had gotten their B.S. degrees from Southern, and Grambling and Leeland College up in Baker, many of them had gone to New York and gotten masters degrees -- had gone over to New York and California -- and I think our principal had a masters degree from Southern Cal. So they were very, very academically oriented people who had gone back and bettered themselves educationally. Of course, Mr. Brown probably was aware of this -- more so than we were.

This explanation is followed with the comment about Mr. Brown that, "He was a very nice fellow."

Mr. Millican stated that this type of intimidation was going on for years.

African American teachers crossing over into Istrouma High School were overtly and subtly reminded that they were outsiders in someone else's school. In one case, Mr. Millican reports that a cross-over guidance counselor was not given an office and forced to move from room to room.

On top of this, perhaps the most direct intimidation came through the use of language that would separate and belittle the African American teachers. Mr. Millican (1999a) describes a clear example of this type of intimidation through the selective use of terms to label African American teachers:



One thing about Mr. Brown, he never did refer to us (African American cross-over teachers) as just teachers. We were always "beginning teachers." He never did. Whenever we were in faculty meetings with all of the other faculty, he would always make a remark, and then he would say, "Now you beginning teachers," talking to us. The two years that he was there; the two or three years after the cross-over, he always referred to us as "beginning teachers." I always wondered why we were never just considered a part of the faculty. We were always "beginning teachers." And of course, you know that was some kind of put down, I guess.

Clearly, it was a put down; however, Mr. Millican places and describes Principal Brown in the context of his perception of the times. The principal is not viewed by his actions alone; but, he is compared to Mr. Millican's (1999a) idea of White cultural norms:

But, other than that he was a pretty fair man. If I had to rate Mr. Brown, I would have to say he was a pretty fair guy, depending on the circumstances that he lived under and the year it was and all of that.

Comparatively, the principal is remembered as a "fair man."

Other administrators were perceived as being unfair. It was the belief of Mr. Millican that some administrators went out of their way to cause problems for African American teachers. One incident is recounted by Mr. Millican (1999a) where he was harassed for being late for his class:

I remember one time I was late for my class. I think I had gone down to run off a quiz for my class, and I was about two or three minutes late -- the bell had rung. And the API, the assistant principal who was in charge of instructors, he met me in the stairwell, and he said, "Mr. Millican, you are not in your class." I said, "Well, oh, yeah, I just had to go down here and run off this test." And he raised all kind of sin about me being two minutes late for my class. You know, he kept raising all this sin, and I said, "Why don't you just go on ahead and write it up in your report and put it in my files, you know, whatever?" And, of course, he didn't do that. He went and told the principal that I was late and wrote a letter to the school board and all of this kind of stuff.

Mr. Millican said that nothing ever came of this; yet, the messages of power and control on the part of a White administrator is evident.

African American cross-over teachers in 1970 believed they had to be careful with everything they did. This was particularly true with their use of language. Language was utilized as a method whereby African American teachers would be required to use the "proper" form of English. African American cross-over teachers believed they needed to be both careful and artificial about their use of language. There was the impression that they needed to speak in a manner that was acceptable to the dominant culture. As described by Mr. Millican (1999b), failure in this area could result in the shame of removal from the school:

I remember an incident at Istrouma when some of the White administrators would always check notes that the Black teachers would write to see if it was grammatically correct. And then sometimes if they would find a grammatical error, they would call them in and talk to them about it. So, I remember the word going around that whenever you write a note to make sure it was grammatical because the principal might get it. And then there were some teachers, I remember this teacher who -- they would come into your classroom and if you didn't speak a certain way, the king's language exactly like they wanted you to speak -- some teachers were called. In fact, I remember one guy who came to me, and he said that he was transferred from the school because of the way that he talked. Not because of his academic ability nor because of his ability to handle the subject matter, but because of his delivery.

From this quote, the question immediately comes to mind, was the improper use of language the only reason this teacher was transferred? The specific answer, however, is not of interest. What is important, is that Mr. Millican and other cross-over teachers perceived that their common forms of speech were somehow unacceptable to the leaders of the school.

While Freddie Millican and other cross-over teachers had to deal with the racial attitudes of administrators, they also had to face similar negative attitudes among their students. Istrouma High School began admitting African American students in the Fall of 1963 under the original "freedom of choice" plan. Under this plan, however, the numbers of African American students remained small. By the time Mr. Millican crossed over in 1970, there were still less than one-hundred African American students in the school. Thus, at Istrouma High School following the cross-over, Mr. Millican was assigned classes that were predominantly White. According to Mr. Millican (1999a), this challenge was faced with preparation:

One thing I noticed about the classes, you had to be on your toes when you went to teach. You had to be doubly prepared because for some reason the White students felt that they wanted to test your knowledge. They would always ask you to explain something more than the normal. And they would always be trying to catch you on something. I can remember they were always saying, "Look there. Mr. Millican, you didn't do this," or whatever. "What about this, Mr. Millican?" So when you made your lesson plan, you had to make sure that you were really, really sharp on what you were teaching -- on your subject matter. And, of course, all of us were; we were sharp on that. Because like I told you, back in the Black schools, we put a priority on being academically prepared because we knew that our kids had to compete against -- you know what I said already. So we were ready to teach, and the academic part of it wasn't really hard. But they would be ready to test you and ask you questions and make sure that you knew what you were talking about. But then that passed after two or three years. They learned that you knew what you were talking about, and that you were not a dummy, and that you were just like anybody else; and everything went along fine.

It is clear that Mr. Millican viewed dealing with student behavior, including their attitudes, as a part of his job. His responsibility was to teach students. He approached this responsibility by working hard to prepare and deliver quality lessons.

A third type of professional interaction influenced by race that Mr. Millican and other cross-over teachers had to confront was with other teachers. This seems to be, for Mr. Millican, the smoothest dimension of the cross-over. The reason given was the professional focus of all teachers on the students. Mr. Millican (1999b) makes it clear, however, that the relationship between most African American and White teachers remained professional and rarely crossed into personal or social areas:

One thing I have learned in my thirty years plus of teaching is that in education the common ground is the student. During the day we would get together just with the White teacher or the Black teacher or whatever. We could get together because we had something to talk about. You could talk about student "A" or student "B", or talk about what this kid did, or what this kid didn't do. There was always something to talk about -- like you could go into the lounge right now and the teachers would be talking about students. That's what we spent most of our time in the lounge talking about. So, back in those days, it was the same way. You could get together and talk. White teachers would talk to Black teachers. And it is the same way today. After school we went our own separate ways. You know, we didn't play golf together, or we didn't go out and have a beer together or nothing like that. So it was all professional, and everything happened. I would talk to guys about playing golf.... We would talk to them about fishing and about hunting and talk to them about golf; but, of course, we never played golf together. But, we had a good relationship at school. Everything went fine at school. Everything was very professional, and everything went along good. So, we were taken in, and we were given the opportunity to sponsor clubs and do everything that a regular teacher would do. And, of course, all you had to do was go in there and do it. I can't remember anything negative about the association between the Black and the White faculty members. I think everything was all right.

Mr. Millican, however, also lived in a community and culture that was outside of the White dominated school.

The complex nature of attitudes and feelings about desegregation in the African American community in Baton Rouge is evident from many portions of Mr. Millican's

interviews. Opinions and feelings were many and varied. When asked how friends and family members reacted to his being at Istrouma, Mr. Millican (1999a) said they were proud:

Oh, man, they were proud. They have always been proud of us. They have always been proud of us as teachers, and I was proud to say that I taught at Istrouma. And they were proud to have a brother, a son, whatever teaching school at one of the White schools. So we were proud to go back in the community, and people would say, "Hey, where are you teaching?" And I would say, "Istrouma High." And they would smile. So we were proud of Broadmoor and Istrouma and Tara. And of course, the people looked upon us as being pioneers and saying that we were succeeding. We were making that cross-over. We were succeeding at it. We received a pat on the back from the people. Nobody looked down at you or said anything.

From Mr. Millican's perspective, the African American community in Baton Rouge was supportive of the cross-over teachers regardless of their misgivings about some of the details of the desegregation policy.

Mr. Millican also describes the race relations in the city of Baton Rouge in favorable terms. This view is expressed in a long passage where Mr. Millican (1999a) talks about race in Baton Rouge:

People wonder why there were never a whole lot of demonstrations or sit-ins and all of that. It was because people have always gotten along pretty good in Baton Rouge. Basically, Baton Rouge has always been a pretty good town. I mean, there are some extremist here that say my kid is not going to go to school with a "nigger", or not go to school here. There are a few of those. But, on the most part, you don't have a whole preponderance of those kind of people in Baton Rouge. I know that even in the little town of Zachary where I grew up, we always -- one street from where I lived there were White people, and we always tried to get along with White people even though we didn't go to school together. And I think it has always been like that. That Black people have always gone to see LSU play. And LSU has always been interested in what Southern did even though we didn't have integration. In Baton Rouge,

we didn't live in two completely different worlds that you might in some places. Something about Baton Rouge, near downtown, where some Black neighborhoods and White neighborhoods really coincide -- and there has always been a cross-over between Black people and White people in the city of Baton Rouge.

In further discussion of the community, Mr. Millican claims that in the community, most people wanted to see school integration work.

For Mr. Millican, one of the problems of making it work was that along with the positive benefits of integration, the policy had many negative effects. An example provided by Mr. Millican (1999a) contrasted the benefits of better materials and facilities to the loss of African American schools:

There are some drawbacks to integration. There are some down sides to it. For example, like I told you when we first started, I graduated from Northwestern High School, and there is no more Northwestern High School -- just Northwestern Middle School -- which means that I don't have an alma mater. There is no more Channeyville High School where most of the Black people around my age graduated back then. There is no more Channeyville. There is no more Scotlandville Hornets. We lost our alma maters. Many of the other people didn't. They didn't lose their's. They still can call Broadmoor, Baton Rouge High, and Istrouma, even though Istrouma is ninety percent Black now. They still have an alma mater. But of course, I don't have an alma mater -- many people don't. You go all across Louisiana. They closed the Black school, and the Black kids went to the White school. That was one downside of it. But then, the plus side of it was that many of these school buildings were not great architecturally strong buildings anyway. They were not built like Istrouma High and Baton Rouge High. They were not built to last fifty or seventy-five years. So, these kids went to a better school. You know, we used to pass by Istrouma High School with its huge gymnasium and its huge track and its big old auditorium and its tennis courts and basketball courts and just a massive building compared to what I went to high school in. These people had better conditions than we had. They had better schools. They had better books. They had more paper. They had just better everything in the white schools. You know the old saying, "Separate but equal"? Remember that? There is no such thing as separate but equal. It was not equal. It was separate,

but it was not equal. And we found that when we went over that Istrouma High had way more than McKinley had in terms of material to work with. Yeah, in terms of resources, they had more. Bigger and better schools, more books, more paper, more pencils, more everything than we had in the Black schools. So, integration has its downside, and it has its good side. And I think overall the good outweighs the bad. That is what I personally believe.

The impact of the loss of a school on an individual and community is strongly felt by Mr. Millican. The high school he graduated from no longer exists. Something from his past has been taken; yet, he strongly believes it was worth the price.

In further discussions, Mr. Millican continued the theme of paying a cost, often a personal cost, in order to achieve a broader and more important social goal. For example, Mr. Millican claims that many African Americans suffered in their professional advancement because of the cross-over. Specifically, many African American coaches were forced to delay their career advancement because of the cross-over. Mr. Millican (1999b) describes this situation:

I know that many of the coaches had to go over to White schools and be a part of those faculties.... Many of the coaches were upset because they were not given head coaching jobs and they were not promoted as fast as they wanted to be promoted when they went to the White schools. The White schools continued to be headed by White coaches no matter how many Black kids were there. You know, just like at the schools right now, the schools that were predominantly White back then still have White coaches -- most of them even though the student body is still overwhelmingly Black. Like at Istrouma High, we have a White coach over there -- and schools like Glen Oaks where the student body is still overwhelmingly Black, but you still have a White coach. So, many of the coaches were upset because they figured that they were not being promoted as fast as they should. Many of them were concerned that they were moving to these schools and they were given ninth grade jobs and JV jobs. They had come from situations where they were number one or number two in line, and when they went over to a place like Istrouma or Tara or Broadmoor, they had been kicked all the way down to a ninth

grade coach or a JV coach or whatever, when they really had been varsity coaches.

For Mr. Millican, personnel patterns begun in 1970 are still impacting people in East Baton Rouge Parish Public Schools today.

Mr. Millican's discussion of the professional cost of the cross-over for African American teachers was followed with a discussion of the impact of integrations efforts on students. It is here, as reflected by Mr. Millican, that many African Americans believe the highest cost of desegregation has been payed. However, Mr. Millican (1999a) makes it clear that he still believes integration is worthwhile:

I am sure that when White people get together, they talk about integration. We Black people, when we get together, we talk about integration. Often times people talk about the negative impact of integration in Baton Rouge. Many people say that when we as teachers, when we had control of the Black kid, when we had control of his mind at a school like McKinley or a school like Northwestern, or a school like Capitol, when we had a captive audience with those Black children, that we taught them. It was a consensus among us that we taught them hard and that we told them that they had to run twice as fast to get ahead or to keep up with the White boy. We figured that we were doing a great job with them. Some kind of way, when integration came along, we lost them. That we lost them to the White teacher, and that some people say that is one of the reasons that some of our kids are going astray, because they don't have that caring and nurturing that we used to give them when we would have them in the Black schools. But, we talk about that. But then, there could be some truth to that. That because we had them in this situation and we knew what the world was like and could train them and make them aware that they had to run twice as hard in the American society. But then, in me personally looking back, I had to look at the positive aspects of integration. And I really believe that it has been best. It's a good thing for the kids because we got a chance to go to better schools; we got a chance to go to meet, in some cases, better teachers; we got a chance to learn things about the culture of the White man that there is no way you could learn in a Black school. Take a person like me who went to a Black high school, who went to a Black university, and who never had any association with White people -- coming up having gone



to school twelve years at a Black school, four years at a Black college, you know -- so when a kid comes up now days, he gets a chance to rub shoulders with the White boy and learn about his culture and learn about his expectations. And many of the good things that White people have to offer can rub off on the Black boy. And vise versa, many of the good things about the Black culture can rub off on the White boy.

These benefits are stressed by Mr. Millican (1999b):

I have seen it evolve now where I see these kids. Now, for example in 1999, I see them, they are hugging and talking just like brothers and sisters. And I can remember when they didn't even look at each other. So you got to look at the progress of the whole thing, and it has got to be good.

Mr. Millican was aware of the high cost of school desegregation in East Baton Rouge, especially for the African American community. After all the years, however, he was left with a positive feeling.

Freddie Millican responded to a final question on his overall impression of the efforts to desegregate and integrate the East Baton Rouge School System. His response was filled with optimism. For Mr. Millican, a key ingredient is time. He has seen racial attitudes in the community change, and he believes that with more time they will further improve. While the original goals have not been obtained, Mr. Millican (1999a) believes much has been accomplished:

Ideally we are not where we thought we thought we'd be in thirty years. We are not where we thought we'd be; but, I think they have made progress in terms of the mixing of the races and integration. I think it is just going to take time. I think that time is the only thing that is going to take care of this. Like I was just saying, if you look back from 1970, if you take the progress that we have made from 1970 to 1999, and if everybody would just write it down and look at the positive aspects of the progress that we have made, then I think we have made good progress. Then you take thirty years from today and look at it again. It takes a long time for things like this to happen; and I think that, going

back to the neighborhood school, going back to where the Blacks go to their schools and the Whites go to their schools, that is not going to get it. I think that they need to continue to work for some kind of way to get the two cultures together where they can work out their problems. It's going to take a lot of work, and it's going to take a little of giving by the Black people and lot of giving by the White people. I think it is going to work. But, looking back, I think we have made progress.

Mr. Millican's optimistic view and call for patience and time are his own. Certainly, his thinking is not unique or unusual; but, there are also many distinctly different perceptions of desegregation and the cross-over and the meaning of these events. In the historically African American Capitol High School, located little more than a mile from where Mr. Millican taught at Istrouma High School, a young White teacher began her public teaching career at the time of the 1970 cross-over. Many of her comments and thoughts about school desegregation and the cross-over are similar to Mr. Millican's. Yet, there are also many interesting and revealing differences.

#### **Helen Haw**

Ms. Helen Haw had one year of private school teaching experience when she became a White cross-over teacher at Capitol High School in 1970 (Haw, 1998, 1999). The year before, she taught in a Catholic school after receiving a B.S. in Education from LSU in 1969. Ms. Haw was not raised in the South, but rather grew up in the Midwest and moved with her parents to Central Louisiana from Chicago in 1963. After finishing two years of college at LSU-Alexandria, Ms. Haw married and came to LSU in Baton Rouge to finish her undergraduate education.

Ms. Haw's reasons for choosing education as a career were also influenced by social norms. In the case of Ms. Haw, the limitations were a result of her gender. Ms. Haw (1998) explains:

I am of that era where little girls had two choices: they could be a nurse or they could become a teacher. Since I hate blood, I went to the option of being a teacher. So not knowing that really I would enjoy it, I went ahead and entered LSU anticipating that I would come out a teacher, which I did.

Ms. Haw knew that she would be a cross-over teacher when she applied and accepted a social studies teaching position at Capitol High School.

When asked about the selection of cross-over teachers, Ms. Haw (1998) answered with a set of practical reasons:

The people at the school board just told those of us who were being newly hired that we would be going to predominantly Black schools because we were the new hires. From what I could gather, they were afraid to try and send any of their tenured teachers to Black schools because they would just quit. The older, more experienced teachers, they were entrenched in the system. They had a job. They had tenure. They were either going to fight it, or quit. They didn't want to lose some of their better, more experienced, White teachers. We were told that if we stayed in Black schools for three years, that at the end of three years, we could request a transfer. Many went in with the idea that you could stand anything for three years. I talked to Black teachers who were in the cross-over, and their comments were that they sent them because they felt that they had been teaching longer and they were better able to handle -- it was sort of like almost a compliment to them that, "You can do this. You're our elite."

This statement supports Mr. Millican's assertion that many people in the African American community felt their schools were being robbed of their best teachers.

Capitol High School, when Ms. Haw began as a teacher there, was a vital educational institution for the African American community in Baton Rouge.

Capitol High School was the second African American High School built inside the city limits of Baton Rouge. The school is located within view of the Louisiana State Capital Building near downtown Baton Rouge. The campus Ms. Haw taught at in 1970, which is still in use today, was designed by the famous Louisiana architect, A. Hayes Towne. The school is set upon a spacious campus. Several buildings with outward facing classrooms, open courtyards, and covered walkways dotted the site. The school also has a large auditorium, large gymnasium, athletic fields, and a track. Because of its location in the middle of an African American neighborhood, Capitol High School has never been able to attract more than a few White students. Following the 1970 cross-over, however, it has had a large percentage of White teachers.

Ms. Haw was one of the first White teachers at Capitol High School. She recalls that when she began teaching at the school there were two White agriculture teachers who had taught there during previous years. Ms. Haw taught at Capitol High School for ten years and left to raise a family. She returned to the school system as a social studies teacher at Istrouma High School in 1994. She is still excited and enthusiastic about teaching at Istrouma High School and working with inner-city students.

When Ms. Haw was assigned to Capitol, she did not know how long she would stay. Ms. Haw (1998) remembers that the new White teachers were given a carrot to entice them to work in African American schools: "We had been promised, kind of quietly, that if you served your first three years, that they would let you out and send you to a 'good school'." When asked what she and other White teacher felt before crossing over to Capital High School, Ms. Haw (1998) expresses mixed feelings:

I was excited. I thought, man, this is a chance; and I really thought I could make it work at the time. Some of my co-workers were bewildered; some were as eager as I; some were naive. I had never really talked with or dealt with Blacks in depth except our maid to be honest because I am from the North, and you didn't associate with Blacks. You never had a reason or an opportunity unless they worked for you. And then, others of the teachers who crossed over were scared.

This statement was followed with a question about the number of White teachers crossing over who resigned because of fear or stress. Ms. Haw remembers that most made it through the first year, and many more stayed for three years and transferred. Regardless of what the other White cross-over teachers did, Ms. Haw did not mention, during her interviews, ever requesting a transfer or even desiring to leave Capitol High.

Ms. Haw recalls that unlike some of the White cross-over teachers, she was not afraid. For Ms. Hall, she did not know what to expect because she remembers little prior contact with African Americans: "The first time I ever came into contact with any Blacks at all was the year began in 1970 working at Capitol High." This statement was followed with a question on the level of her preparation in the College of Education at LSU for teaching in a racially integrated classroom. Ms. Haw replied that, "We never talked about that at all. We never dreamed it would happen. It was never a topic of conversation." The only preparation Ms. Haw was given to prepare her for entering a multiracial environment was the orientation seminar for cross-over teachers at LSU prior to the 1970 school year.

Ms. Haw remembers little of the event that impressed her except for the speech by Southern University professor, Dr. Butler. From Dr. Butler, Ms. Hall (1999) recalls receiving what she recalls as key advice:

He told us a lot about African Americans that most of us didn't know. One of the most impressive things that I remember him telling that I took to heart was that African Americans are very aware of people who are for real and who aren't -- who are putting on a facade -- people who are sincere -- and he talked about the way that people are like onion skins, and we have so many layers of onion skin and when you peel them off and peel them off, then you finally get to the core of the person. He advised us all to be as real as we could be, and I took that advice to heart. It has worked for me as a teacher.

When asked about other speakers at the seminar, Ms. Haw replied: "Not too many people were too very interesting."

With the advice from Dr. Butler and few preconceived notions or expectations, Ms. Haw began her cross-over job. Her open attitude resulted in a memorable incident during her first few days. Recalling the event with humor, Ms. Haw (1998) tells the story of a encounter involving Capitol's Principal, Charles Keel, and several students:

We had just been in school a few days and, of course, being totally naive and not understanding why everybody was half scared to death, I got some of the young men to go to the book-room with me. I looked around the room, and I picked out the biggest, strongest guys. I had about six of them in tow and was walking to the book-room with them straggling behind me, and Mr. Charles Keel, who was principal at the time, looked up and saw me up on the balcony and started hollering out there: "Miss Haw, what's wrong? Is there something I can do for you? What's wrong?" And I said, "No, we are just going to the book-room to get some books." And he goes, "Oh, Ok." He later told me that he was terrified, and he had no idea what was going on because I had six of the worst thugs trailing behind me that the school had; and he thought I was having problems.

For Ms. Haw, her attitude was a key to her ability to work with the students at Capitol High School. This narrative also indicates her perception of her treatment by the school's leadership.

Ms. Haw remembers the administration as openly supportive and never intimidating. Rather than the thinly veiled hostility encounter by Freddie Millican at Istrouma, Helen Haw remembers that, "They were glad to have us." When asked about the African American Principal at Capitol High School when she began there, Ms. Haw (1998) smiled, and fondly reminisced with the following:

I have nothing but the greatest admiration and respect for my former principal. Charles W. Keel was one of the greatest men to work for as a new teacher I have ever met. He was there to lend support and help. But when he found out you were doing your job and could do it, he left you alone to do what you needed to do. I was an advocate for the students, quite frankly, and often I would go to him to talk about the child who was in trouble. And a lot of times he would back me and give that kid a second chance because he really believed in students and their right to learn. He would often tell us, "You are teaching children, not a subject." And I have kept that in mind. I don't teach civics or American History, I teach kids.

Mr. Keel was not the only administrator Ms. Haw remembers as being supportive. The Assistant Principal is also remembered by Ms. Haw (1998) with fondness:

The other principal that I worked with was assistant principal; he was Calvin Bruner. He was a very, very nice man. He started to get ill after a few years and got a little bit more religion than we are used to in public schools, so sometimes it made it kind of difficult to work with him. He eventually retired though. And I think he went on to be a minister or something for a few years before he died.

Ms. Haw had little to say about the White assistant principals who came following the departure of Mr. Bruner. Ms. Haw (1998) bluntly stated, "We had a succession of White administrators who were also putting in their time so that they could get their heavenly reward, or their earthly reward, and go to a White school and be a principal. And they did." There is no indication from any of her narrative, that Ms. Hall ever felt

pressure to do something different because of her race. In her dealings with students, Ms. Haw believes she always had the support of the administration.

From Ms. Haw's account of the interaction between White cross-over teachers and African American students, many of the most difficult elements of the cross-over faced by the teachers are revealed. On several occasions Ms. Haw mentions the high level of fear of the African American students among the White teachers. For example, the act of being touched was often misunderstood:

Some of the White teachers were afraid; and the kids would try and touch them, and that scared the daylights out of some of the White teachers. But when you stopped to find out why they were touching you, it was because many of them had never been around a White person before; and they didn't know what our skin felt like; and they hadn't a clue what our hair felt like. So they would sneak up behind us and touch our hair. And it wasn't because they were trying to harm us, but because to them we were exotic. And so they just wanted to know what we were like.

Remarkably, it appears from this passage that much of the fear was a result of lack of knowledge -- lack of knowledge of other cultures existing in the same city.

While teachers are remembered as having problems in this area, Mr. Haw initiated physical contact with students as an expression of her own will and confidence. Ms. Haw (1998) recounts one particular incident that seems to have earned her respect:

I wasn't afraid, so I didn't act as though I were afraid. I didn't have any trouble, and that kind of blew people's minds. Of course, I have a bad temper, and if anyone decided they didn't want to do what I wanted, then I am not the nicest person in the world. They tell me I have "the look", ha, ha. So I got away with a lot with those guys because I didn't have enough sense to be afraid. I remember one kid coming in and telling me -- he walked in and he wouldn't take off his hat; he didn't have a pen; he didn't have a pencil; didn't have paper; and he wasn't going to do his work. So, I got so mad I grabbed him by the arm, and I tossed him out of



the room. And, of course, everybody was shocked that I would do something like that because you just didn't do that to a student.

There is an indication here that Ms. Haw understood the need to be strong in the presence of students. This strong will combined with a strong commitment to students is evident throughout her narrative.

One mark of her commitment to students was the method Ms. Haw recounts using to motivate some of the students to learn. Like students in schools everywhere, there were some students at Capitol High School who took advantage of stereotypes on the part of White teachers to avoid difficult work. Ms. Haw (1998) talks about how she handled this problem:

Sometimes the kids would try to "Uncle Tom it" or act dumb -- put on the face -- if you will, a facade that they were dumb, and they really were not. But, it was working in some of the classrooms. Some of the White teachers were pretty naive as to their ability, so that if they were in math they would act like they couldn't add or subtract so they would have to start all over. They were young enough so that they didn't realize that they were hurting themselves but old enough to realize that they could put a con over on their teachers. So I would always try and find out who could read because we had some reading problems. A majority of them could read. So when a kid would come up to my desk to read and say he couldn't read, I would say, "OK, that is fine." I had already arranged it with Mr. Keel, and I would write a note saying, "Mr. Keel, please remove this student from my class and put him in some type of remediation as he claims that he cannot read. Sincerely, Mrs. Haw." And I would fold it over and hand it to the student and tell him to take it to the office. Generally, he would get about half way down the steps, and having read the note, then come back and read to me. The few who made it all of the way down the steps, I knew they really couldn't read because they would cheerfully carry it to the office. And when Mr. Keel

would get it, he knew what I was doing. So, you had kids who would try and get over -- try and act like they couldn't do the work -- lazy.

Other teachers are remembered as not being as perceptive.

When teachers came into the school with preconceived attitudes and perceptions, their ability to be productive with students was severely limited. This combined with the efforts of some students had severe consequences, according to Ms. Haw (1999):

A lot of them were frustrated because they bought into that story of the kids not knowing anything. It is a self-fulfilling prophecy. They thought the kids were dumb; they taught them on a low level; the kids didn't really achieve much; so they didn't see much success. There wasn't a sense of fulfillment. It was like, "We are never going to change these people. I just want to get out of here." They did their time and got out.

Ms. Haw makes it clear that all of the students were not trying to avoid work. Ms. Haw (1999) counters her remarks on motivating students with a comment on the many students who were motivated: "Of course, you had the other group that just desperately wanted an education and desperately wanted a chance to be someone, to achieve, to want to learn. You couldn't give them enough information."

Sometimes students resisted her efforts more forcefully and Ms. Haw needed to take a stronger stand. Ms. Haw (1998) recalls with pride one such stand. For her, it was the type of moment that made all of her efforts worthwhile:

One kid, the first year I was there, I tried to get him to read, and he got angry and kicked the chair and told me no and walked out. About a week after that, he caused some trouble in one of the White teachers' classes, and they found out he was twenty-one. And so they expelled him. And the last thing he did was he came back to my class and to my room, and in front of all of the other students he picked up the textbook and he read out loud. He turned around to the classroom and said, "Mrs. Haw, I have been expelled, but I wanted you to know I could read." He turned to the class and said, "She is here to help you; listen to her," and

walked out of the room. So there were the moments that made you want to stay.

Ms. Haw is and was not a 8:00 to 3:00 teacher. For her, succeeding at Capitol High School, required being accepted as a member of the broader community from which the students came. To this end, Ms. Haw spent long hours at the school, in the neighborhood, and in the community. She volunteered to chaperon many school outings and functions. She also served as a faculty advisor for the Girl's dance team and Girl's Auxiliary of ROTC. These activities effected Ms. Haw's relationship with other teachers at the school

When asked about her relationship with other teachers, Ms. Haw recalls a variety of attitudes and feelings. When asked about other teachers, Ms. Haw becomes very quiet. Ms. Haw's (1998) lengthy reply is somber and sad:

Those were difficult times. They were very difficult times. At first the Black teachers were fairly receptive. Every now and then someone would let slip, "Well you took John's place." "When John was here," and that type of thing because they missed their co-workers. They didn't mind my being there, but they resented the fact that one of their own had to go for me to be there. Mainly, they were cordial but distant -- afraid to be hurt. As I became closer to them and worked more with them and was willing to go out into the community and was willing to chaperone events at school and all, I became very friendly and still maintain some very warm friendships with some of those people who were there. Unfortunately, I can't say the same for all of the White teachers I worked with because the ones who were against integration and didn't want it to work, and there were some, who did not like the fact that I was doing my job regardless of what color the students were. They did not want to chaperon; they did not want to be involved with sporting events; they did not want to be in community at night, so they resented my doing it because it made them look incompetent, basically. So, I lost some potential friends along those lines. I didn't really care. There were a couple of us who were doing what we should, and we hung together. And we hung out with the Black teachers and ourselves. As time went

on, racial tension got to be a little bit more prevalent among the faculty. And the lounge would be -- we would all use the same lounge, but there was the Black side and the White side. It was kind of inconvenient because if you wanted to talk to somebody on the Black side, everybody looked at you when you went and sat over there. And woe be it for any Black to come sit on the White side. Everyone was cordial to each other, but there was no friendship; there was no intermingling; no mixing among faculty members the way you see today. And finally, one of my best friends who was also White and another girl and I took the work table and put it in the middle of the room and put chairs around it and got a couple of Black teachers, and we would all sit at the work table in the middle of the room. We did things like that. We would rearrange the furniture so that it would make it uncomfortable for everyone to try and separate. But, finally, we just sort of gave up because there was not much you could do to change certain people.

Later, during the second interview, the topic came up again. Once again, Ms. Haw's description reflects change followed by feelings of futility. Ms. Haw (1998) describes how those teachers trying to break social barriers gave up:

It was a strange situation because some of us got along well from the very beginning. We even partied together. We'd go out on Friday afternoons for drinks or we would meet at one of the Black teachers, a single guy's, house. Our spouses would meet us, and we'd have an evening of drinking and talking and dancing. Just in general enjoying each other company. Then at work a lot of times there was that reserve again. Now you find that we rarely associate socially, but it's almost as though they sense we know that barrier is there socially and no one's necessarily trying to climb it. We work well together professionally. I have no problem going to ask for help or suggesting something to one of my African American colleagues, and they seem to have no hesitation in coming to me. We work well together. Socially, quite frankly, I rarely socialize with any of my fellow teachers. I don't frequent the lounge at all. So, I really don't know what's going on along those lines. A couple of times I have been to one of the teacher's houses here, and, occasionally a Black teacher will drop in. But, it's not a big issue one way or the other. It's just seems that socially no one is making an effort.

In the end, like Freddie Millican, Helen Haw describes a situation that indicates professional desegregation at school without personal social integration outside of the

school. Unlike, Mr. Millican, Ms. Haw's description of her own family and community's reaction to her crossing over to teach at Capitol High School is not supportive.

Mr. Millican remembered a large amount of pride within his own family and community that he was teaching at Istrouma High School. In contrast, Ms. Haw (1998) responded to this topic with a series of questions she was commonly asked:

"You're going where?" "You're doing what?" "Are you going to be safe?" "Is it dirty?" "Does it stink?" "Do you wash your clothes every night as soon as you come home in Clorox?" "What do you mean you drink after them, and do you use the same glasses, and cups, and plates?" Those were the questions that I got.

When asked how she responded to these questions, Ms. Haw laughed and said, "I would tell them that it is the same as anywhere else -- probably cleaner and no smell; and, no, I did not wash my clothes in Clorox. There was not anything I was going to catch."

Ms. Haw discussed this topic later with a much more serious tone. Rather than pride in her, Ms. Haw (1999) remembers family members being ashamed:

My family was ashamed of me. They felt that I wasn't making the grade as a teacher. Because if I was a good teacher, why would I stay there. They would frequently ask me why I hadn't gotten a transfer? Was I going to ask for one? What was the matter, couldn't I get one? They didn't tell people where I taught. Sometimes I felt ashamed, too, because, they made you feel as though you were a second class teacher.

This is one of several occasions during the interviews when Ms. Haw expresses feelings of isolation and being alone. Ms. Haw, however, balances these feelings with positive thoughts about her relationship with the people in her students' neighborhoods and community.

As a frequent chaperon and sponsor of student organizations, Ms. Haw was often involved with functions and activities outside of the school. Further, as a concerned teacher, she knew that the most effective way to deal with a problem with a student, or to encourage a student doing well, was direct personal contact with the student's parents. Thus, Ms. Haw was commonly in the homes and community around Capitol High School. Ms. Haw (1998) remembers always being treated as a guest when she visited the homes of students:

Most of them were very, very welcoming; a little bewildered -- not quite sure how to treat a White person entering their home, always eager to help, always eager to cooperate, trusted you immensely. There were a couple of my students who could not go to any school functions unless I picked them up. When you went to their homes to let them know that their child was not doing what they should or doing what they should, it was cordial. I drank many a cup of coffee. Not necessarily always stuff I wanted, but, you know, the homes felt like if you didn't accept their hospitality, they were in the wrong.

This insight was brought up again during the second interview, and Ms. Haw (1999) continued to recall feelings of gratitude and acceptance:

Initially, they were surprised. The first thing they did was bring out the coffee pot. It has been a Black tradition that when someone comes into your home, you offer them something to eat and drink. They were always grateful to me to have come. They had all ready heard about me from their neighbors or the kids. They knew I wasn't going to be putting on airs and I wasn't there to cause trouble. I was there because I was genuinely concerned. They accepted me as such. Also, it didn't hurt that sometimes I just went over and sat and chatted. If it came up and somebody asked me to help chaperon a private party at their house, I did it. The fact was that they almost felt I was a member of the community. It was not unusual for the community to see me at all hours of the day and night. Because of that, I was well accepted. I had even gone into a couple of the bars to find some parents.

Ms. Haw, saw her involvement in the community life of her students as a professional obligation. For her, she was accepted because her motive was the welfare of students. Regardless, Ms. Haw was clearly challenging the social norms of her own White culture regarding racial interaction.

Many incidents resulting from her unconventional professional life are described in detail by Ms. Haw. The first incident involves her treatment by White police officers while escorting the Capitol Pep Squad to a football game. Ms. Haw (1998) relates:

I would chaperon the Lionettes, the pep squad, at the ball games; and they had started assigning White police at Memorial Stadium. And, of course, I would sit on the Black side, and frequently a White policeman would think I was on the wrong side and lost. He would be happy to try and direct me elsewhere. They would try and rescue me, and when they would find out, or if it was an all Black game, they knew I was supposed to be somewhere. And when they would get afraid, you could see the fear in the eyes of the police. They had their dogs, and I have had them pull guns out on us and threaten to put the dogs loose. The fact that I was in there and White made no difference because you could see in their eyes that: "You're here and, you know better than that. You ought not to be, and you must be Black like they are or trash."

The next question was, "Did they really use dogs and pull guns?" Ms. Haw responded that there was a fight and the police got scared and drew their weapons.

There were other incidents involving the police -- one in New Orleans and one at LSU. Ms. Haw had taken the Girls ROTC Auxiliary down to New Orleans to march in a Mardi Gras parade. Ms. Haw (1999) tells how a policeman could not believe that a White woman would be chaperoning a group of African American female students:

I used to go to New Orleans with the ROTC group. We had the girl's auxiliary because girls couldn't belong to ROTC back then. We had the little uniforms and the whole nine yards. We would march in the Mardi Gras parades along with the guys. I would march on the side the way

any good chaperon did to make sure nothing happened to my girls. One evening for Rex, a policeman tried to get me away. He thought I was heckling the girls. He tried to get me out of the parade and away from my group. My kids immediately jumped to my rescue and started ganging up around him saying, "You can't take our teacher. She is with us. You can't make her leave us alone." They got very, very upset. But, he just could not imagine that a White women was walking with those Black kids.

Many times the situations had much more serious consequences than a quickly resolved misunderstanding.

It was not unusual for Ms. Haw to be accused of inappropriate conduct after being seen in the community with some of her students. Ms. Haw (1999) describes one of these events when accusations occurred after she brought some students to a function at LSU:

One time I was at LSU for something, one of my students came up and we were sitting together at the union. I went back to my car. He came, and I dropped him off somewhere. An LSU cop stopped us, got all my information, sent it in to the office. One policeman actually got in touch with my husband and told him I was hanging around with Black men. Luckily, my husband knew this, because it was a student and he knew it. I had students over to my house with my husband there. It was not a problem for him. There would be people who would call my husband and tell him I was running around on him with Black men. Just, you name it, it happened.

The extreme differences between the ways in which she was treated by different groups within her own race and culture led to an obvious question on the personal impact of being a cross-over teacher.

Ms. Haw (1998) describes her feelings as being somewhat schizophrenic, in a very sane way:



If you have ever read Susan Edgerton's book dealing with curriculum, she talks about the schizophrenia in reading. Well you can carry that thought or concept -- you know how you get, you almost become part of the book; you interact with the book, and you get that feeling of schizophrenia. I think a lot of us got that same schizophrenic feeling when we crossed over. I know that I did. And, you became a part of that culture to some extent. And you could see some of their views and some of their feelings, and you could empathize and become a part of the community. And then, when you went home in the evening, there was that abrupt transfer back into the White world, and you were part of your White community and White life. During the weekends and summers, you were White, and school term and school time you lived in a Black world. So you did accept some differences. I felt like "Alice in Wonderland," or something that fell through the hole.

Listening to her stories, Ms. Haw's claims are easy to understand. Certainly, all of her experiences influenced her impressions of the results of the desegregation effort.

When asked to describe the results or possible benefits of desegregation in East Baton Rouge Parish, Ms. Haw was not encouraged with the progress and concerned for the future. For her, public school integration is something the people do not want:

It didn't work. It is still not working. We are sitting here in a magnet school that was designed to entice White students, and we have got maybe twenty-five White students, or non-Black as they put it because we are so grateful when an Asian walks in the door that we can count them as a non-Black that is part of our percentage. So, I'm sitting here watching it, and I don't think that it is working. And I think it is because the majority of the people power don't want it to work.

This statement was followed with a question on what she believed might have been done differently to make school integration work. Ms. Haw's answer calls for the changing of attitudes, leadership, and support from the media. In the end, however, Ms. Haw (1999) is pessimistic:

Same thing that could still be done. We still need cultural diversity education. I don't want to say multi-culturalism because that has almost

become synonymous with not doing anything now days. I think we need more education as to the diversity and to the differences among cultures so that we can understand when we are offending someone or why they react the way that they do. I don't think that it is just a Black-White thing; I think we need it for the Asians. Two years ago when our superintendent had his mass meeting, he pointed to it eloquently by what he didn't say. Because he talked about the need for multi-cultural education. He immediately then said Black and White. He never said a word about the Islamic students we have, never said a word about the Asian students we have, never said a word about the Hispanic students we have. He broke it down into only Black and into White, and it's not that -- it's not just that. And when our own superintendent of education is not aware of the cultural diversity of the community, then it shows we need re-education. I also think we need a more positive attitude from the media, who are quick to be here pointing cameras when something goes wrong at a Black school and are equally quick to hide some of the things that go on at quote, "the White schools" that are just as bad; but they don't play them up. Again, the corporate executives who make sure that their new people don't put their kids into our schools. This whole attitude -- I don't think the South is now, was not in the '70's, nor ever will be ready for integration.

The interviewer was reluctant to accept a complete lack of hope, and when probed further, Ms. Haw (1999) said:

Well, you have got to go back to the old saw: "You can lead a horse to water but you can't make him drink." I think as long as there are cultural differences between Blacks, Whites, Hispanics, Asians and all of the other nationalities, I don't think you can force people to accept each other until you educate them to the differences. And we are not doing that. I think we really have to look at what multi-culturalism is and means. And I think you have to start small. I don't think you can legislate who people are going to like. I think that you would have to provide a really safe haven on a small basis of voluntary integration. Maybe one school with your best teachers that you can possibly find. And if need be, pay them more. And get willing parents who are committed to the belief, who are committed to making it work, and set up one model school and make it work.

Unfortunately, Ms. Haw is clearly aware of the legal and political restrictions to her type of solution.

Regardless of this dim ray of hope, Ms. Haw concludes her thoughts along two lines, one of personal gratitude and appreciation of her experience and the other of deep concern for the future. In speaking of the impact on her own life, Ms. Haw (1998) said:

The cross-over totally changed my life. It totally changed my ambitions and my aspirations. I tried to go back to being, thinking all White, and I have never been able too. I have gone and taught private schools and Catholic schools, and I remember the crying need of these kids out here and then how grateful the ones who make it are when they do as compared to the "world owes me a living attitude of the White kids." And the desire to teach someone and make a difference in their lives constantly draws me back to inner-city schools.

For the future of education, Ms. Haw (1998) offered little hope:

I am worried about the future of education in East Baton Rouge Parish. I don't see any ray of sunshine in the foreseeable future because the adults are so busy arguing that they are not giving the educators the chance to educate the leaders of tomorrow. Until people can go, "Enough is enough, let's just get on about the business of education," I don't see much changing here. We are all going to lose because the very people who are spending the most time arguing are soon going to be the elderly, and they are going to be the most susceptible to the damage that we have done to our young people educationally. These very young people that are being hurt with all of this are going to be the ones that are taking care of us in our old age.

During both interviews with Ms. Haw in her classroom at Istrouma High School, there were interruptions by students seeking help with school, advice or information from Ms. Haw. The relationship between Helen Haw and her students was clearly evident.

Remembering Terkel's claim that oral history is an art, the attempt has been made in this chapter to allow the voice of the narrative, the individual to be clearly and accurately heard. These narratives are full of meaning on their own. Yet, they were also acquired with a specific set of questions in mind. To further investigate the

research questions, shorter versions of four additional narratives from educators who served in the East Baton Rouge School System during desegregation are presented in Chapter Five. These narratives add clarity, legitimacy, and different perspectives to the meaning of the cross-over.

## **Chapter Five**

### **Narratives of School Personnel During the 1970 Cross-Over**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter presents the narratives of four individuals who worked in the East Baton Rouge School System during desegregation. Three of these educators were also employed during the 1970 cross-over. Robert Aertker, a White male, was Superintendent of the East Baton Rouge School System from 1965 through 1969 and resigned prior to 1970. Mr. Aertker's Superintendency, however, was marked by the desegregation experience. In addition to Mr. Aertker's narrative, three other perspectives on desegregation and the cross-over are included. Following Mr. Aertker's comments, the recollections of Joyce Robinson are presented. Ms. Robinson is an African American female who was working as School Librarian at Harding Elementary School, a school with all African American students, during the 1970 cross-over. She was involved with the cross-over by representing the district as a Cross-over Liaison for her school. Next, the thoughts and stories of John Gerbrecht will be summarized. Mr. Gerbrecht taught high school band in East Baton Rouge for over 30 years. He was a White male teacher at Lee High and Baton Rouge High during desegregation and also directed the All-Parish Band. While not technically a cross-over teacher, Mr. Gerbrecht witnessed the cross-over first hand. Finally, the narrative of Donald Hoover, a White male will be presented and discussed. Dr. Hoover spent his career in the central office of the East Baton Rouge Parish Schools. During the 1970 cross-over, he was the District Science Supervisor and a member of the court ordered biracial committee. The biracial

committee developed the plan, accepted by the court, that established the cross-over policy.

As in the preceding chapter, these narratives are not intended to present a comprehensive picture of all stories and all points of view. Rather, the purpose is to present narratives that reflect on common threads of experience. Again, the goal is to explore a small group of narratives in depth. These educators were all in the school system during the cross-over and involved with the cross-over. The list of other potential interview subjects is lengthy and could include school level administrators, parents, students, community leaders, attorneys involved in the case, school board members, civil rights leaders, and on and on. All of these perspectives have potential to address the research questions.

The individuals interviewed, however, were selected for several reasons. First, they are all people who were in careers as professional educators and who as a result of historical time and place were part of school desegregation in East Baton Rouge Parish Schools. None chose their role; yet, for all of them, their professional lives became bound up with integration for many years. Second, there is a relationship between these four narratives and the two cross-over narratives presented in the previous chapter. For example, Dr. Hoover and Mr. Aertker explain how cross-over teachers were selected and provide a rationale for the policy. Ms. Robinson and Mr. Gerbrecht express perspectives of educators at a school who observed the arrival of other race cross-over teachers. Finally, like Mr. Millican and Ms. Haw, these four educators were willing to discuss their experiences with desegregation and the cross-over of 1970.

### **Robert Aertker**

Mr. Aertker was appointed Superintendent of East Baton Rouge Parish Schools on January 9, 1965, to replace Lloyd Lindsey on June 1, 1965 ("R. Aertker Named," 1965). He rose up through the ranks. Mr. Aertker began teaching at Pride High School in 1937, and became Principal of Baker High School in 1946. He moved to the central office in 1956 as Assistant Superintendent, and continued there until he was appointed Superintendent ("R. Aertker Named," 1965).

Mr. Aertker's role in the desegregation of East Baton Rouge Parish Schools was primarily the development and implementation of the "grade a year plan" begun in 1963. It was shortly following the end of this plan and the court ordered massive student and teacher cross-over in 1969, that Mr. Aertker resigned as Superintendent. When asked about the cross-over of 1970, Mr. Aertker (1997) replied: "I wasn't Superintendent when that happened. Maybe I saw what was coming and decided to maybe retire." What stands out, however, and what he mentions on several occasions, is pride in the "grade a year" efforts. It is apparent that Mr. Aertker viewed the "grade a year" plan as the only practical solution.

Along this line, Mr. Aertker repeatedly expresses what he views as his pragmatic approach to school desegregation. This attitude is evident in this comment from Mr. Aertker (1997) about his cooperation with Judge West:

I met with Judge West, and I think he understood, and I understood -- we were not trying to evade the court order. We were actually trying to honestly make something work. But, by the same token, we recognized that some of the requests that were being made were really causing some problems that we thought would be best if we did under our plan. I think

the fact that we had very little incidents of that nature indicates that the plan we had, while it was slow, was at least effective and was working.

As Mr. Aertker discusses the implementation of the "grade-a-year" plan in East Baton Rouge Schools, his pragmatic philosophy is realized as a mechanism of control. His narrative is full of examples involving his interaction with students, teachers and administrators.

Mr. Aertker was involved in the decision to began student desegregation at the twelfth grade and then work down one grade a year. Following the implementation of the plan which allowed a few African American students to attend White schools, Mr. Aertker (1997) maintained tight control of the process:

We opened up with the twelfth grade, and we screened everyone of them that we were admitting.... We screened on two major points, and that is the academic achievement that they were achieving at the Black school level and also the record they had as far as discipline was concerned. We were interested in not inheriting and trying to make something work with some people who came in trying to create dissension and problems. So we screened them. I will say that I personally reviewed every one of them who was admitted and reviewed them, and I said OK, or yea or nay.

The application procedures used by African American students seeking a transfer under the "grade-a-year" plan are explained in Chapter Three. It is clear, however, that Mr. Aertker as Assistant Superintendent and Superintendent viewed himself as the final judge.

Once students did transfer, the Superintendent maintained tight control. Mr. Aertker tells of hiring an African American, Mr. Horace White, to handle student



relations. An account of an incident at Baton Rouge High School illustrates how Mr. Aertker (1997) perceived this relationship:

There is one incident that stands out in my mind, and it was at Baton Rouge High School. They (African American students) were demanding that we fly the flag at half mast. I think it was somebody's birthday. I don't recall whether it was Martin Luther's (subsequent checking with other sources revealed that this incident happened on the day Martin Luther King was assassinated), but anyway it was some deal, and as I went out there with Horace, and they were all milling around there. They were fixing to pull the flag down. I said, "You are not going to do that now because we are going to try to work this thing out. But we are not going to do that because it is not a legal holiday." And, I said, "You are out of class, and I am going to give you about fifteen minutes to get back in class; and if you don't believe that I mean what I say," I said, "I am going to have you arrested, and I am going to press charges." And, I said, "And if you look out over on that street, you will see some parked (police) cars." And they were parked on the front and on the side. I said, "That's the ones I am talking about. Now you can go back, and we will still talk about it." Horace talked to them and told them -- in fact he told them -- "I can tell you the man is going to do it now." He said, "But, let me tell you what he is trying to do; he is trying to help you all. He is trying to make this thing work." They gradually drifted on back to class. That is really the only, the closest thing to open defiance that I encountered.

When asked how this incident was finally resolved, Mr. Aertker said that he told the students the proper forum for this type of issue was the school board. Mr. Aertker (1997) then further asserted his authority by telling the students, "I will make a recommendation if I think it's in order, and I will recommend against it if I think it is not in order." It appears, that in the end, the decision was Mr. Aertker's.

From Mr. Aertker's point of view, there was a logical reason for this. The role of superintendent during that time involved a careful balance between the realities of change and continuing resistance to change. There was clear precedent from the

experience of Lloyd Funches in 1963, that failure in this role could lead to removal from office. On one hand, Mr. Aertker controlled a process of slow and limited desegregation; on the other, he was intolerant of individuals in the school system he saw as resisting any school integration. Mr. Aertker (1997) said, "I personally spoke to all the principals and told them it wasn't a question of defeating something; it was a question of how we were going to make it work."

There was also some resistance from teachers. Like the students, there was a small number of teachers who began to cross over prior to the massive 1970 teacher cross-over. Also, many White teachers were teaching African American students for the first time. Mr. Aertker (1997) explains why this was difficult for many teachers:

The most difficult thing, probably, was having to deal with teachers who were not used to being -- well, maybe culture is the wrong word, but anyway -- not used to being involved with Black people. It was real difficult for some of them to adjust. We used one policy pretty much. We accepted all volunteers. But if they didn't, last come, first to go. In other words, if you went into a White school last, you were the first to go to a Black one, and the transfer would be made. When an opening was there, a cut at a White school, a Black was the one who came. We tried to select people -- I don't like to use the word racist because I just don't believe we thought about it terms of whether you were racist one way or the other at that particular time -- but, how well, we thought, if they had personality and the ability to get along and adjust to the changing situation.

When asked what he did when teachers opposed being transferred, Mr. Aertker (1997) replied, "I said, 'I would suggest you just get out because I believe you would do more harm than good if you transferred over. And I know it would do more harm to you.' Many of them did."

This type of take it or leave it approach is evident again from Mr. Aertker's answer to a question on teacher support. In his answer, the role of "Cross-Over Liaisons" was discussed. And once again, the top down power structure is divulged from Mr. Aertker's (1997) comments:

We employed school people personnel, and we called them "Teacher and Pupil Liaisons." They were assigned to all of the different schools. They went to the schools, and they talked to both teachers and students as to what were some of the problems that they might have, that at the central office, that I or the superintendent could help you with. We did not overlook a school. We went to every one of them and listened to them. There were some, frankly, I know, that I spoke to some principals to say that, "We have just got to change this. It has got to be this way." It's the same way with the Black: "You have got to do this, and this is going on; and I think it is detrimental to a school operation, and we have just got to change it around." I said, "If you can't live with that, then we will have to see what we can do for you."

For Mr. Aertker, the leaders in the school were the key to success.

Opposition to desegregation efforts on the part of school administrators or teachers was not tolerated. Mr. Aertker (1997) explains how resistance to his desegregation efforts was met:

If the principal and the teachers and all were determined to make it work, it worked. If you had some ones who refused to admit the facts of life, then you had some who got acquainted with the facts of life; and that was that they were there, and it was going to work.

This statement was followed with a question on the number of administrative changes that were made as a result of resistance to the desegregation efforts. Mr. Aertker responded that a few people moved to other districts or took early retirement. Further, he stated that the attitude towards school integration was a major consideration in promotions and school appointments.

Although Mr. Aertker left the school system prior to the 1970 cross-over, his narrative reflects both the successes and the limitations of the "Freedom of Choice" plan. It is not hard to see, however, why the plaintiffs in the Davis (1961) lawsuit were discouraged with the progress being made. Following the discussion of his role in the "Freedom of Choice" plan, Mr. Aertker's interview shifted to his current thoughts on the desegregation efforts in East Baton Rouge Parish. The answers to these questions are also highly reflective of the cross-over experience even though they are not specifically addressing the 1970 school year.

Mr. Aertker expounds on the impact of school desegregation in several areas.

First, Mr. Aertker (1997) believes it resulted in a change of racial attitudes:

I think that contrary to what a lot of people believe, I really believe that it has helped race relations. I think that many people finally got an education that a Black person is not going to come in there and stab you. I will admit we had some incidents, but that concept of the inherent danger, I think we -- the fact that there would be major altercations if Black students played a predominantly White school if you had that. I think that is one of the things that has come out of it that has been beneficial for the peace and prosperity of the community -- that we have decided that Black doesn't represent a violent threat to your life and to your family.

Second, Mr. Aertker (1997) discussed the large numbers of White students who left the public schools and the creation of private schools in Baton Rouge:

I think primarily bussing. I think it just created a -- not only created a tremendous inconvenience when you -- but the very fact that they were taking them out of their neighborhoods and putting them into -- whether it was a true conception or whether it was false -- but putting them into an environment that they felt was dangerous, or that was unacceptable to them was the primary thing. Even though they could barely afford it, they said, "We are going private." That's the way they are today. We haven't lost any -- people are still having children, and we have the same

amount and a little bit more, and we have more people in Baton Rouge. And yet private schools, especially the newcomers on the scene, they are all packed -- and from what I understand, doing a fine job as far as education is concerned.

Finally, the prevailing attitudes of people is lamented by Mr. Aertker (1997):

I think that probably the most disturbing thing to me was the fact that some people were just unable to adjust to the change. It was just traumatic for them to go from the all-White situation or all-Black situation. Incidentally, the Blacks had as much traumatic results from the change over as the Whites did because they just were -- well they were coming into another environmental situation. There is, and there was, a difference. So, some adjusted great. Some of them just kept their, what I call the same old motives or *modus operandi*. What was from the school they left would have worked all right. But from the school they were going to, it just wasn't something that would work there. It was something you had to change around. As I said, that was transferable. White had the same problem, and Black had the same problem.

Throughout the years before the 1970 cross-over, Robert Aertker was a professional educator with considerable political and professional power. He used his position for what he saw as benevolent and moral purposes. He led the school system from a time of no integration to a time when over a thousand African American students were attending previously all White schools. Racial barriers for many teachers and administrators were beginning to break. Although his method was firm and stern, there was no great upheaval in the school system or the external community during his tenure as superintendent. As a White male in a position of immense authority, his views of the desegregation effort are much different than an African American librarian at an elementary school in the center of an African American neighborhood during the same time.

### **Joyce Robinson**

Ms. Joyce Robinson was born and raised in Baton Rouge (Robinson, 1999). She graduated from McKinley High School in 1959 and attended Southern University, where she received a degree in Library Science in 1963. Ms. Robinson began her career in the East Baton Rouge Parish School System as a Library Clerk at Capitol High School in the Fall of 1963. In 1965, Ms. Robinson was a pilot librarian under a program designed to establish libraries in elementary schools. Under this program, Ms. Robinson worked at Scott Elementary School and Harding Elementary School. Both schools had all African American students at the time. The following year, in 1966, Ms. Robinson became the full-time librarian at Harding Elementary.

Ms. Robinson remained at Harding Elementary for ten years. She was there during the 1970 cross-over. No White students came into Harding that year; however, about sixty-five percent of the teachers were inexperienced White cross-over teachers. Ms. Robinson was given the responsibility of facilitating the inclusion of these new teachers into the school when she was appointed "School Cross-over Liaison." Ms. Robinson (1999) talked about the reasons she was selected as a liaison as well as reasons why she was not selected to cross-over:

Fortunately, I was left at Harding because one of the things at that time, they didn't feel it was the very best thing to move guidance counselors or librarians. Guidance counselors would be there to nurture these students as they would be faced with White or Black teachers. Librarians, especially in the elementary school had just began to get the collections off and going and suited to the needs of the students and teachers at that location. They didn't want to move them. I guess in a sense, it was good for me -- good for me in the sense that I didn't have to go and start over building a library. That may sound a little selfish, but I was one of the

facilitators. I was the facilitator for Harding. Every school in the cross-over had been marked with one individual who had been there for a while to be a facilitator or a liaison person between the new teachers, the principal, and their needs. Fortunately, I was chosen to be one.

After a brief stay at Nicholson Elementary School, Ms. Robinson transferred to Istrouma High School where she remains as the head librarian today.

While a student at Southern University, Joyce Robinson became actively involved in the efforts to desegregate the schools. Ms. Robinson (1999) described her involvement in the promotion of desegregation and her early time in the school system:

Going back to 1961, I was one of those who participated in the marches to the downtown Third Street area. I thought about it, and I participated because I felt that when it comes to education, all boys and girls should have the same equal access to education. There should not be that certain materials, supplies on hand, were available to some certain group, and then maybe not available to another. My being in the march was because I felt that equality needed to come about. I graduated from Southern in '63, and I realized turmoil was still going on. I was here in the school system as the gradual process of a few Black teachers going into the White schools to teach as well as a few Black students were going into in the White schools to learn. It was a tense time for both areas -- for the teaching area as well as for the student and the learning area because pressure was placed upon them. It meant that seemingly that they (African Americans) had to excel over and above just to be a part of the school. But, I didn't -- luckily, I guess you could say, it might have been unlucky, I don't know -- I did not have to be in that part of the scenario of being asked to be a librarian in a predominantly White school at that time.

The implementation of the "Freedom of Choice" plan had almost no impact on Harding Elementary, and Ms. Robinson was not directly involved in school desegregation until the 1970 cross-over.

Ms. Robinson remembers when White teachers would come and look at Harding as a potential school in which to teach. The language of these teachers implied that they had a choice. Ms. Robinson (1999) recalls:

I even remember in 1970, when it became the mass cross-over of teachers, in many instances I would be standing on the grounds when White teachers came. Their comments were something like, "I came to look the school over to see if I wanted to be here;" or "I came just to look around. I am not sure what I want to do." "I wanted to look at the facilities to see if they are acceptable."

Of course, all of the teachers had a choice of whether to stay in the district or whether to teach or not.

For Ms. Robinson (1999), however, the fact that White teachers would come over and talk like that revealed a much different attitude than that of the teachers at Harding at that time:

I heard when some Black teachers were pulled to go into White schools, they were just told, "This is the school you are going to." If there was any (African American teachers), there were so few, next to none, that could go to a predominantly White school and say, "I am going to look it over to see if I want to be there." They were given an assignment, and they just went. Some were unhappy, but I don't think that really anyone was concerned about it if they weren't happy. It was like "This is the job. Take the job, or you leave the job."

Overall, Ms. Robinson remembers that around twelve to fifteen African American teachers left Harding and were replaced by White cross-over teachers in 1970.

Ms. Robinson and the cross-over teachers coming into Harding Elementary attended the orientation seminar at LSU. Ms. Robinson talked about the same speech from Dr. Butler that was mentioned by Helen Haw. Ms. Robinson (1999), however,



talked about Dr. Butler's advice on what to do if someone referred to you with a derogatory term:

I always remember a paragraph of Dr Butler's speech that day when he was shocking White teachers and Black teachers: "When you as White teachers go into a Black classroom, and if a Black child decides to call you 'honkey,' don't turn into a beet." The same applied to Black teachers: "When you go into the classroom of those White boys and girls and they call you a 'nigger,' don't you almost let your eyes pop out."

Dr. Butler emphasized that teachers should focus on the task at hand and not let feelings resulting from individual actions be a distraction. The topic of conversation then moved to the arrival of the cross-over teachers.

When asked how the incoming teachers performed, Ms. Robinson (1999) said that most of them did well:

I must say that those number of White teachers coming into Harding, overall they were really good. I think we had one, maybe one or two, that became unhappy and just couldn't handle it; and that is normal. When you think about it, you have been in the status quo of how you have lived all these years doing status quo things; and all of a sudden your world is turned topsy turvy. As I would see it, it is a big adjustment. Everybody's not designed to adjust that quickly. As I think later, those two teachers that I am thinking about, they were later in the school system; but, it just took more time to establish themselves to know that integration is here and here to stay, and that they had to do some things.

Ms. Robinson said that she still knows some of the successful cross-over teachers at Harding. Unfortunately, some of the cross-over teachers had problems.

Ms. Robinson was asked to discuss the nature of some of the problems.

According to Ms. Robinson (1999), most of the problems were related to differences in culture, including the use of language:

I think some of the Whites they -- first of all -- they were very unsure of themselves because number one, I think it is about language. Language that Whites use is different from language that Blacks use. You know, expressing themselves and what they mean is looked at in one particular picture from what Blacks say and what they mean as another picture. There were racial slurs on the parts of both. There were times when students made some of these slurs as well as, believe you me, there were teachers who made comments that were inappropriate.

When these types of incidents happened, Ms. Robinson and the school's principal would usually meet with the teacher and attempt to work out the differences.

There were times, recounted by Ms. Robinson (1999), that some of the cross-over teachers looked for help because they did not know how to deal with African American students:

I found that White teachers wanted to be supported in maybe the way they handled the class.... When they got in trouble it was like: "Back me and take care of me." Like with the behavior of the students. I really feel like it was that in most instances, White parents just disciplined their children differently than the way that Black parents disciplined their children. So, they didn't always know, and I found that used to be a real big problem with how the behavior in the classroom was handled, and the teacher having to relate to that and know what to do with it. Sometimes it caused some blowups.... They seemed to have not been able to almost make a whole day. They would just be worn. I don't know why because when you would look at the Black teachers who were still there, even the new ones who came in, their classes were under control. I think it was more of a fact that they just didn't know what to do with Black students because this was a first time for them. It was something that needed to be just kind of worked out. And that is where many times I even found that when I didn't have classes coming into the library, I would sometimes go to the classroom of some of those teachers to kind of be like there to support them.

This topic was explored further, and Ms. Robinson (1999) continued to emphasize cultural differences. In addition, she believed that attitudes from home also caused problems:

It was just that the Black students knew for some unknown reason, they could not get off with certain things with Black teachers. But it was this time where they felt they could try. I also realize that things they heard when they got home made them react when they got back to school in that classroom with that White teacher. There is no sense in trying to sidestep it. We know that many times there were comments made; and, these children heard that, and if it sounded unfavorable they executed that when they got back to that classroom. I guess it was the same thing with White children who had to come to the classroom to a Black teacher. I do recall some Black teachers feeling that their patience had been tried at the end of a day. Comments and behaviors that some of the White children would do in the classroom; yet, they would not have done that if there would have been a White teacher. I think a lot of it was prompted from home, community, coming from their own community, coming from their home environments that made some difference. That was a culture of what they were being taught or what they heard. Their parents, either Black or White, were not cautious about what they said in front of their children. It was making an impact on the classroom. That's where it was realized, in the classroom.

According to Ms. Robinson, educators in East Baton Rouge Parish had to confront at school the attitudes their students brought from home.

A few teachers also had beliefs and attitudes that were counterproductive to desegregation efforts. From Ms. Robinson's (1999) perspectives, such people are not limited to the cross-over period:

There were a few teachers who on both sides were, I guess you could call, diehards. They had some very strong outlooks on what should or should not be. To be honest with you, I think even today we still are faced with that. There are those who feel they need to be in a certain

level compared to some others at another level. I don't think we are ever going to get rid of that.

Some of the attitudes of students and teachers were hard.

It was a strain on those working to make the cross-over successful; but, Ms. Robinson (1999) believes that attitudes take time to change and that resistance and negative actions are part of the price for change:

I think it might have been a strain on a lot of folks. But I believe in the long run it was worth the effort because it had to start somewhere. Anything that you are trying to start anew, you need to be prepared to say that you have to persevere, you have to give up maybe some things, or you really have to believe that what you are going to do is going to make a difference. If you don't have that out in sight, then it cannot happen, or it won't be successful. I feel that it was a strain on both Black and White teachers. On the parts of both, it was like, we can make it happen. It can be what we want it to be down the road, but together we all will have to work at this.

From Ms. Robinson's perspective, the cross-over was difficult. In the end, Ms. Robinson (1999) believes that desegregation opponents were overcome and the effort was successful:

It is always considered that you will have somebody working against; but, we just have to work harder to overcome that few.... But you just have to be strong and overcome it. I must say I think this parish overall, East Baton Rouge Parish, really did do a good job in trying to make this new adjustment in integration because when I look around the country -- you can look in other parishes, there was much more chaos going on than what East Baton Rouge Parish had. We had some things, but it wasn't nothing I think compared to when you look at other areas at that time.

Ms. Robinson went on to say that in the process of racial integration in Baton Rouge there is much more to be done.

The key for success, Ms. Robinson believes, is the individual. This is true for the individual living in a neighborhood, the individual raising his or her children, and the individual working in the school. First, Ms. Robinson (1999) discusses how to end bussing: "We are almost into the millennium; we are still forced bussing; but, we wouldn't have to have such wide bussing if we could get neighborhoods more integrated." Second, Ms. Robinson (1999) states her belief that individual attitudes are more important than forms of policy:

Integration comes with the individual, him or herself. You have to want to make that difference. You have to want to say that it can work. I will help to make it work. I am going to show where I am with this. If you haven't done that, I don't care how many creative little ideas you come up with, it doesn't not work until the individual themselves want to make it work. That is important. It is all about self. When self is not into it, it's not going to work. I don't care what you say or what you do, it's not going to work. We have to commit, and I know that's not a word that I should use too often. But commitment is the key to all of this. It's the difference. No other way to put it.

At the conclusion of her interview, Ms. Robinson (1999) was asked to reflect on her participation in the desegregation of the Baton Rouge School System:

I am so glad to have been in this point in time of when integration kind of officially started and the middle latter sixties that I was a part of that -- that I am still here to see the growth of integration and what it has been and what it has not been. I certainly as an individual, I've worked hard to help make the difference just through my work area with the students as well as with the faculty and the administration.

As a school librarian and a liaison to assist the cross-over process, Ms. Robinson saw herself as actively participating in the desegregation efforts. In contrast, the next interviewee presented was focused on teaching music. The desegregation and the cross-over events were something he experienced professionally without specifically being

assigned as a cross-over teacher. As a White teacher in a White school, the cross-over came to him.

### **John Gerbrecht**

Before retiring in 1994, John Gerbrecht taught music in the public schools for thirty-eight years (Gerbrecht, 1999). He taught high school band in the East Baton Rouge Parish Schools for twenty-nine years. Prior to coming to the district in 1964, Mr. Gerbrecht taught in Breaux Bridge, Louisiana; New Orleans, Louisiana; and Port Allen, Louisiana, across the river from Baton Rouge. Following twelve years at Robert E. Lee High School from 1965 through 1977, he taught music at Baton Rouge Magnet High School until his retirement.

Mr. Gerbrecht decided to become a teacher rather than a professional musician. For him, it was the only practical choice for a musician wanting to raise a family. Mr. Gerbrecht (1999) explains:

I enjoyed teaching. Back in high school I had a few students that I taught. It was a hard decision, you know, because most musicians when they go on through college have got to make that choice whether you want to try to play professionally or teach. I just felt that teaching was my strong point. I was a good player plus I also wanted a family -- I wanted a home life. If you are going to be a professional musician and just play, you usually have got to hit the road -- work the road and move around. So, and anyway, I got a lot of self satisfaction, and a lot of people who teach really sometimes just teach because it is the only thing they can do; or, they can't find other work. I felt that was the best for me -- for the kind of life I wanted to lead. In other words, marry, have kids, and I felt I could continue to play, and I did. Because when I started teaching, if you didn't moonlight, you didn't make it.

And Mr. Gerbrecht did moonlight; playing trumpet for twenty-five years with the Baton Rouge Symphony, playing jazz with local and New Orleans bands, and traveling around the country playing rodeos and circuses during the summer.

Mr. Gerbrecht began at Lee High School at the start of the third year of the "grade-a-year plan." By that time, there were a few African American students at the school. Mr. Gerbrecht (1999) remembers that it was five or ten students at the most.

He was asked how these students were received in the school:

In the Lee High area you had quite a few parents -- a lot of the students were children of LSU professors. You might say educated parents who understood the problem. So a lot of the kids were Ok. Not all, many of the students were staunch segregationists from years back, and their parents and some of the faculty felt that way. In my situation, we have a language in music that everybody understands. Even though I did have some trouble communicating with some of the students. You taught some of the minority students. Sometimes, when you speak to them, it would go right in one ear and out the other. They would just look at you, and it would be like talking to the wall behind them. I don't know whether it was a communication problem, but it wasn't with all of the students. But I had no problem teaching and communicating because my general philosophy was, "Take a student where they are."

According to Mr. Gerbrecht, students came into band with a wide range of skills. His method was to assess the skill level the student had and begin from there.

For Mr. Gerbrecht (1999), effort was the important factor in determining the success of his band students:

My philosophy was you just had to take the student where he is and help him to progress. Now in the process, you know, you had to always require the work, and if it wasn't done, I graded accordingly. And so some students wouldn't stay with it; but, that would always be their choice. I had some problems communicating, I would say, but that was because the students were coming in and they had been in different schools and schools with poor teachers who didn't speak the same

language all of the time, used different discipline tactics -- maybe threatening tactics. So I had some problems with that, but I was able to work through them and had some outstanding minority students.

Success with the incoming students required for Mr. Gerbrecht (1999), flexibility and patience:

All their past teaching was different. The standards were not the same. But, as far as the intelligence and talent, to me, it was there. The weakest thing was how well they were prepared from one grade to the next. Which meant in my teaching, if I didn't have the attitude of taking the student where he is and then try and move him forward, then I would have had to just throw up my hands and get out. You must have that attitude if you want to be a teacher. I felt I had patience, and that is probably why I taught. No one can, without patience, teach.

Mr. Gerbrecht goes on to speak with pride about former students who are now professional musicians and others who are successful band teachers.

Like the other interviewees who were working in schools, Freddie Millican, Helen Haw, and Joyce Robinson, John Gerbrecht discussed language in the interactions between teachers and students. Also like the other interviewees, the role of language was brought up without being prompted. For Mr. Gerbrecht (1999), the problem was over confusion about proper racial labels:

There were names you would use. "Negro" was used for a while. You used "Colored" for a while. Now you use "Black." But anyway, we had all of these names. It was during time that we were still using "Colored," and I had called for this young girl. I asked another student, "Catch the colored girl that just left the room." I had to give her something. And so, she heard me and she came back and said, "Mr. Gerbrecht, can't you call me Black?" And I said, "Yeah, I can call you Black but you know what, you are really not Black. You are a pretty brown." But she was, you know, of mixed race.



Mr. Gerbrecht clearly did not view the student with malice or intend to insult her; however, it is likely that his language held a different meaning for the student hearing it.

When asked about the arrival of African American teachers at Lee High School, Mr. Gerbrecht had little recollection. Mr. Gerbrecht (1999) believed it was because as band teacher, he was somewhat isolated from the rest of the school:

I don't remember. I know we got some Black teachers in, but I don't remember any problems. I don't recall many problems as far as faculty. I was busy all of the time in my own building. As far as the faculty they, seemed to cooperate and get along personally pretty well.

In contrast to the teachers, Mr. Gerbrecht remembers the attitudes and actions of some administrators more clearly.

Mr. Gerbrecht (1999) described an incident during the cross-over school year of 1970 in which there was some racial fighting in the cafeteria. This incident followed a pair of separate assemblies for White and African American students. Mr. Gerbrecht was not involved in the incident, nor did he witness it; however, he did hear people talk about the causes and how the school administration handled the incident. Mr. Gerbrecht (1999) believes that the administrators were not prepared to deal with this type of problem:

It could have been handled better by administrators, for sure. They had been used to one race schools all their lives. I am talking about my superiors -- principals, assistant principals. If they were brought up as segregationists and that's how they felt all of their lives, it was difficult

for them to handle a diversity of students coming from different neighborhoods and complete different environments.

Later, Mr. Gerbrecht (1999) continued with this type of reasoning:

They just didn't know how to handle it back then. It was new to them, and they were, had been in this segregated system for so long. I knew it was going to take time. Those people had to matriculate and retire and go on with their attitudes until younger people came up. It went a little bit too fast, and I think that is why they are still having problems.

Mr. Gerbrecht clearly believes that there is little that can be done to change peoples attitudes.

These attitudes were revealed again as Mr. Gerbrecht (1999) discussed some of his problems and experiences as director of the All-Parish Band:

It was the first year I was at Lee. We had an All-Parish Band where we would hold auditions, and the best students from each school would get into the All-Parish. And, of course, they wanted to integrate that. No problem; they should have been integrated. But a lot of the schools who wanted to fight integration, I mean they weren't willing to. There were many segregationist still in the system and in the administration and in the board. And a lot of people feel that way now. It is hard to change people who have been feeling that way all of their life, you know? So, it's going to take time. But, they put me in charge of the All-Parish, and a lot of the schools pulled out. So, I was in charge of it; and I told my principal, I said, "I can't pull out my students. I am running the show. I've got to make it."

This statement was followed up by a question regarding the circumstances leading up to Mr. Gerbrecht's (1999) superior wanting him to withdraw his directorship of the All-Parish Band:

It may have been an assistant principal who would have liked to have seen us not participate that year. But, I knew where he was coming from, so I wasn't surprised. We went ahead with it. Now it's fully integrated. And after that year, we had more students come back. Things like that, that should have been changed long ago. Even the

minute they started the little "freedom of choice", they should have opened that up and at least let the students audition. Give them a chance from other schools. And, that's what happened that year.... They were going to permit the All-Parish to be integrated -- allow them to audition. To me that was a good step. And, if you are going to use any area to try to do something like this, it seems like they will always choose the arts and music because students who play instruments -- I mean the trumpet is a trumpet, I don't care if you are White playing it or Black playing it, or a clarinet. The kids seem to understand that. They know they are speaking the same language when they are playing music. So, consequently, that is what they chose. The first magnet school was performing arts. So they have used performing arts to accomplish -- I say sometimes the dirty work, but it's got to come somewhere to accomplish diversity. I don't know. Everybody knows what the problem is, you know. The Civil War ended, but it didn't change feelings that quick.

Given these thoughts, John Gerbrecht was asked what was accomplished through the desegregation effort.

Mr. Gerbrecht has seen change resulting from desegregation, especially in young people. Regardless of the changes in attitude, Mr. Gerbrecht believes that much more could have been accomplished. Mr. Gerbrecht believed the "freedom of choice" plan was working and just needed more time. Mr. Gerbrecht (1999) repeatedly mentioned the problems caused by forced busing:

If they would have given "freedom of choice" enough time, it would have accomplished just as much as they have accomplished so far. Now, the teachers, you had to change that and the administration. That is where they should have made the changes. But, it would have been hard, you know.... That is where it should have -- diversity should have changed. It should have all worked from the top down. The minute they started, you know -- of course, they said they had to do it from the bottom up, but I do not know. It has gone this far... The worst thing they did was the forced bussing. They should have let it go with maturity, with the "freedom of choice". Of course, they would have had to make all of the schools equal. I think when I say equal, teachers, facilities, equipment, all of that should have been the same. Of course, that was

controlled by the central office, school board, those people. The teachers had nothing to do with that.

In his final comments, John Gerbrecht reflects back on his previous comments. He recognizes that his solutions were not practical given the involvement of the courts and other factors. Yet, Mr. Gerbrecht (1999) wonders if the cost has been worth it:

The diversity in the school system, I just don't know. There is a lot of waste. Probably before, with the start of integration, there is a lot of waste. I had a clock at Lee High. I tried for twelve years to get the clock fixed. And at Baton Rouge High, too. Same thing, I had a big clock on the wall; and it still doesn't work. I was in there the other day. Come and bring a brand new clock and hang it up on the wall. It never would keep time. Of course, the schools are in pretty bad shape all of the way around now. People are just not wanting to support them. I have given you what I would have done differently; but it wouldn't have flown, I don't think. Not once you get into the courts. If the school board could have kept it out of the courts. Once the judges came down and said do this, all of the schools are going to have this much Black and White. How are you going to do it? Oh, lord, the money and the time that they spent on consultants coming in and partly because they didn't want to do it. They wanted someone from outside to come in and tell them, and usually they didn't know either. It's too hard.

John Gerbrecht, in retirement, still does volunteer work with young and people and music today. When interviewed, he had just returned from a concert performed by high school band students.

John Gerbrecht measured the success of desegregation by the successes of the individual students he worked with over the years. Success, however, is measured and viewed in many different ways. He did not see much value or success in the desegregation policies adopted in the school system, especially after the 1970 cross-over. From the perspective of a district level supervisor, many benefits flowed from the cross-over and other efforts of desegregation.

### **Donald Hoover**

Dr. Donald Hoover began his career as an educator teaching science in East Baton Rouge in 1956 (1998). In 1961, following his attendance at a special federally funded science education program at Oak Ridge, Tennessee, Dr. Hoover was appointed by the school district as a Helping Teacher in Science and Mathematics. Several years later, he was appointed District Science Supervisor, the position he held during the 1970 cross-over. Prior to the cross-over, in 1969, Dr. Hoover was appointed as a member of the biracial committee established by the school board following Judge West's ruling on January 16, 1970 ("Judge West," 1970). The biracial committee was charged with developing the specific plan for achieving the court ordered faculty desegregation that later became known as the cross-over.

According to Dr. Hoover, the committee was given one year to plan and prepare for full faculty integration in the school district. Dr. Hoover (1998) described the committee:

It was an interesting committee. We had one person on the committee that I think was an ultra conservative racist White, and we had another person on that committee who was equally adamant with Black. So we had a Black extremist, and a White extremist, and I wondered about the logic of that kind of composition for the committee. But basically what it did; it welded the rest of us together. The antagonistic behavior of those two people really welded the rest of us together. It was a good solid committee, and we worked in good faith. I think the results, even though the two extremists made a lot of noise, were not great obstacles in us getting done what we needed to get done.

The committee did develop a plan that included a method for choosing the cross-over teachers.

The burdens this plan placed on African American schools because of demographics and the inequitable impact that resulted have previously been mentioned by Mr. Millican, Ms. Haw, and Ms. Robinson. Dr. Hoover (1998) was asked if other alternatives were considered:

Whether to choose (cross-over teachers) by lottery or go by seniority. All of us saw the unfairness to Black schools in taking such a large percentage. One of the things we wanted to do was to phase it in so that it would not be such a tremendous shock to faculties initially, but the courts did not approve that request. So we ended up one year with all Black faculties and all White faculties, and the next year was basically sixty-five percent of every faculty White and thirty-five percent of every faculty Black.

The question was then asked why a lottery system was not used. Dr. Hoover responded that contact with other districts that had used a lottery system indicated that there were many problems associated with it. Dr. Hoover (1998) was then asked if senior faculty members, especially from White schools, were considered as potential cross-over teachers:

No, as a matter of fact that never came up. It was never considered. Again, hindsight being twenty-twenty, it's something that may have been an option. But, the thing that stopped that from being a viable option was our feeling that the more pliable teachers, or teachers that were more willing to adjust would be the younger teachers -- that the older teachers were already set in their ways, their biases were firm, and there would be more conflict -- both Blacks and Whites. By the way that was one of the decisions of the group that was almost unanimous. I think it was unanimous.

Regardless of the reasons, the impact in terms of faculty change of the cross-over on the African American schools, which lost sixty-five percent of their teachers, was greater than on the White schools, which lost thirty-five percent of their teachers. These

numbers were mandated by the court, and the bi-racial committee was bound by the law.

Dr. Hoover was asked what he thought about the tight control by the courts at the time prior to the cross-over. In Dr. Hoover's (1998) answer, he recalls the desire for justice: "Many of us felt that there was a tremendous injustice in that we were bussing Black children right past White schools long distances to get them to schools, and many of us felt that was unfair and not right." At this point, Dr. Hoover (1998) paused to make a clarification in the terms integration and desegregation that qualified their use throughout his interview:

But I think that before going too far into the discussion we have got to separate integration from desegregation because those are two different terms and mean two different things. All of us (central office staff) felt that integration was necessary. I think the problem in East Baton Rouge Parish is that we looked at this from the point of view of desegregation and have never faced the issue in terms of integration. All that means is that we went through the motions of establishing ratios and balance in terms of those things without really getting to the issue of integration. I think integration implies a change of attitude; it implies a lot of things that desegregation doesn't. I think that there were a lot of things done during that time, and even with cross-over teachers, during the cross-over era, that tried to help in that understanding. But, I think the attitude was always that this was an attempt to facilitate the desegregation process. I think the attitudes of our political decision makers has always been one of desegregation and not integration.

This different use of the terms "integration" and "desegregation" explained by Dr. Hoover has been adopted and maintained throughout this work. The reason is that it makes a distinction in attitude between wanting to do something or having to do something.

The previous quotation also indicated a difference between political leaders and the personnel at the school district's central office. Dr. Hoover (1998) was asked if these differences of opinion with political leaders included members of the school board:

Yes, I think so, and I think mainly because the board is an elected body. It was their feeling that the people that elected them expected them to preserve White integrity and even to some degree Black integrity, even though during those days, prior to the single member districts, there were very few, if any, Black board members.

Later, Dr. Hoover (1998) clarified these comments:

I have said things that would imply that I felt like the board did not assume its rightful responsibility, and that is true. Yet, there were members of the school board that really were anxious for this to go right. But, I don't think the school board ever faced the issue in terms of integration. They faced the issue in terms of desegregation. They tried to do what the courts required them to do, and that's it.

Strong opposition to desegregation in the community is evident from Dr. Hoover's narratives. It is important to understand how this opposition was expressed.

Dr. Hoover (1998) was later asked to further elaborate on community views:

We are products of our environment, and we were all raised with certain attitudes and beliefs. And yet, as young people, we had an opportunity to question those things.... I think, by and large, that most of us knew that there was a wrong being committed. I think most of us felt like there needed to be some resolution. Most blacks felt that there was a wrong and that there needed to be some resolution. The attitudes of Blacks was different. Most Blacks that I knew were anxious for some change to be made, but were not anxious for conflict. And yet, there were Blacks who were anxious for conflict. In my mind, that has been one of the flies in the ointment. From the beginning there were people in the leadership in the Black community who did not want a solution. They are anxious for the conflict. I would say that the same thing is true with some people in the White community. By and large, there was



great opposition to being forced into this; yet, there was not sufficient leadership or initiative to do this voluntarily.

Again, as in the case of the requirements for teacher cross-over, the district was required to desegregate its students and teachers regardless of public or board opinion.

Dr. Hoover continued to work as a supervisor through the cross-over year of 1970. Dr. Hoover (1998) witnessed teachers in many types of settings and provides an overview of the adjustment process:

People would disagree with this, but Blacks did not have as much difficulty with the cross-over as Whites. I think Blacks were a lot more attune to the White culture than Whites were to the Black culture. Black teachers going into an only White school, a formally White school, did not have a lot of difficulty adjusting to that even though there were youngsters in some of those classes bringing some feelings from home and were disrespectful. So they did not have an easy time of it. But, by and large, we provided training to help them cope with that. But, that kind of training is no substitute for actually experiencing it, and many of these Blacks that were in the cross-over, and there were, like I said before, large numbers of them -- this was an adjustment for them, and yet it was not the kind of adjustment or the severe trauma that we saw with Whites. Again, the Whites that were involved in the cross-over, by and large, were younger teachers because we were taking only one third of White faculties beginning with the least experienced to the most experienced.

This response described both African American and White teachers in general terms.

Dr. Hoover was also asked if he could remember any specific incidents involving cross-over teachers. Dr. Hoover (1998) replied:

Yes, I can remember some threats against the teachers, especially up in the Zachary area, the Broadmoor area. There were some teachers that received calls that reported it to us. Often times it was not just at the home but at the school. There were bomb threats. There were other kinds of things that took place that kind of reflected an antagonistic nature of some of those who opposed the process.

For a comparison, Dr. Hoover (1998) was asked to reflect on the experiences of White teachers who entered African American schools:

The language -- the attitude about authority. These were things that they just had difficulty coping with. I mean I would have teachers come into my office and basically they were the younger teachers, what you would call the "innocents" today. They had been brought up in a silk purse community and had never had to experience the common use of bad language. The fact that when they got angry they called them "White bitches," and things like that. These teachers didn't want to cope with that. Even language that was not set in bitterness or anger, but language that is color language, to many of them not meant for offense, they found offensive. It was so difficult for them to cope with that. I think the hardest thing was the lack of discipline. Many of the students were just completely out of control.

Further discussion on this topic was encouraged and Dr. Hoover (1998) responded:

I think that it is a matter of the culture itself. Even though many Black parents are exemplary parents and their children are well behaved and well controlled, there are many Black students, in those days especially, that went into homes, and their culture was built around their peers in the community. It was a harsh culture. It was one that had them building up walls for survival. Some of those walls were aggressiveness. It was part of their culture, and it existed long before this. But, there is no way to prepare some of these individuals for that, to understand that often times the use of profanity is not too profane in the eyes of the person who uses the language.... Profanity is a matter of what's in the heart. A lot of, especially our young teachers, just could not deal with the trauma of that. It was trauma.

From a very different perspective, Donald Hoover's observations are remarkably similar to Joyce Robinson's. Ms. Robinson also saw cultural differences in language use as a problem for White cross-over teachers.

On the whole, however, Dr. Hoover recalls the cross-over being smooth. Dr. Hoover (1998) said that teachers remained professionally committed to their students:

There was no really open conflict. Things went amazingly smoothly in the schools. The kinds of things that took place came later once the desegregation had taken place. I recall some backlash kinds of obstacles. We put people in the schools that were prepared to deal with conflict. We picked the areas where conflict was most likely to take place, and we tried to provide additional resources to keep that from happening. I think, by and large, we were successful in doing that.

Elsewhere during the interview, Dr. Hoover notes that parish-wide test scores were expected to drop following the cross-over; and they did not. It is Dr. Hoover's recollection that most teachers continued to teach much as they always had.

From the discussion of the impact of the cross-over on teachers, the interview with Dr. Hoover moved to his thoughts on the benefits and negative impacts of the cross-over today. Dr. Hoover (1998) has seen changes in racial attitudes:

Well, I am glad they (desegregation events) happened. You know, for a lot of us, we felt like at least it was a beginning. People don't realize today how far we have come. I mean, we look at how far there is to go, and we get awfully upset with that; but some of us know how far we have come. There are relationships that exist now that are a result of integration, not desegregation, but integration. There are people who work side by side together like we used to work in the fields, and they don't think anything about it. We can go places together and eat together. We can do things together that we were not able to do in those years. I think we have come a long, long way. I am encouraged. The problems that exist are the problems that are surfaced because of the few and the willingness of the many to remain silent.... I think for some, for the first time they began to look at Blacks and Whites as individuals rather than as groups of people. They began to relate to one another in personal kinds of ways where skin was not a barrier. You did not think of one another in terms of race, but rather in terms of your friendship or in terms of your cooperativeness as a member of the team. I think that is the big change.

While encouraged about what he sees as changes in racial attitudes, Dr. Hoover (1998) lamented the loss of community support for public education following the cross-over:

Some of us remember that we had a top quality school system back in the '60's and the '70's. We had people from all over the country coming to see what we were doing in this parish because we had a good school system. We were on the growing edge in the new curriculum. We field-tested a lot of the new curricula that sprung up in the '60's. It was fertile ground for change, and we had never lost a tax election through '64. The community supported us because we had a good reputation, and they felt their tax dollars were going for something good. We recognized that when this took place that there would be a significant portion of people who would not vote for a school tax because of the desegregation issue. I really believe that is still the case. You can call it what ever you want to, but when people say that I will not vote for this until you present an accountable plan. And you present an accountable plan, and then they find another reason not to vote for it. When you get an endless number of delays like that, then you have to ask yourself, what is the reason? I think that for the last tax election Gus Wile (local political personality who often does radio programs) said this and was cut off the air. He said what the real reason was; there are people who just cannot face the issue of desegregated schools.

Dr. Hoover's (1998) final remark that, "there are people who just cannot face the issue of desegregated schools," is an appropriate end for the presentation of narratives in this work. As Freddie Millican (1999a) said on a different topic, "There may be some truth to that." Actually, that is a good approach to have when considering the meaning of the six narrative stories presented. The important element for the purposes of this study is their recollections, thoughts and opinions. When considered in the context of the historical record presented in Chapter Three, there is some truth to all of these narratives.

These narratives, however, were collected for a reason beyond their presentation. They were collected to answer a set of specific research questions. Three questions were asked relative to specific political, sociological, and anthropological theories. Chapter Six addresses this goal. The narratives, along with the historical record, will be used to answer the questions. In addition, they will be considered in their implications for theory.

Finally, they will be used, through the application of narrative theory, to say something new to add to our understanding of the meaning of desegregation of our public schools.

## **Chapter Six**

### **The Meaning of School Desegregation and the 1970 Cross-Over in East Baton Rouge Parish**

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this chapter is to answer the research questions set out in Chapter One using the findings from the historical investigation and oral narratives collected..

The three research questions are:

1. What were the perceptions of school personnel regarding the process of desegregation and the massive 1970 cross-over?
2. How did the school system's culture react to the changes resulting from desegregation and the 1970 cross-over in terms of learning and teaching?
- 3 . What were the attitudes in the community of Baton Rouge towards the desegregation process and the 1970 cross-over?

General answers to these questions are found throughout the narratives of the interviewees. The purpose here, however, is greater.

First, there is the need to appraise the utility of the political, anthropological and sociological theories set forth in Chapter One. Specifically, do the research results support or contest these theories? A second purpose is to use the narrative theory described in Chapter Two. In Chapter Two, an argument is developed in support of the use of oral history and relates specific concepts of race, subjectivity, and meaning through the writings of Scheurich and Young (1997), Egea-Kuehne (1996), and Popkewitz and Brennan (1997). This new and unique combination of oral history and writings on educational research is used to interpret the narratives to come to a deeper

understanding of the meaning of the historical record. The results of this interpretation are further cultivated to suggest new meanings for desegregation. Finally, a set of conclusions is advanced in the form of recommendations to help guide future policy and practice in multiracial educational settings.

### **Research Results and Existing Theoretical Models**

#### **Meaning Examined Through Political Theory**

Rossell (1997) argues that school desegregation is a powerful symbol in American political culture ultimately representing the limits of government and judicial policy. To promote racial integration, Rossell believes that incentives in the form of quality educational opportunities for Whites will be successful because today there is broad acceptance of the idea of racially integrated schools.

The limits of forced school integration are also theoretically explained through Plank and Boyd's (1994) discussion of "antipolitical" policy development. Plank and Boyd speak of a "flight from democracy" that occurs when policy decisions are taken away from local officials. The effect is parents withdraw their children and support from the public schools.

The narratives suggest several concepts that warrant consideration through Plank and Boyd's (1994) views. First, from the historical record and the narratives there is abundant evidence that during desegregation and the 1970 cross-over in East Baton Rouge Parish Schools that local participation in the political decision making process was abridged. Court involvement resulting from the Davis case, and the "packing" of the school board in 1961 by the state legislature ("School Board," 1961, pp. 1A, 8A) are

two examples. However, it must be noted that for African Americans the legal system actually became a tool through which they could increase their political participation. Second, declines in student enrollment, failure to pass school tax elections, and the narratives of educators indicate a drop in the level of public support for the public schools, especially from the White community. This is consistent with the "antipolitical" theory. Third, the cross-over itself is evidence of the correctness of Plank and Boyd's (1994) assertion that "(D)isagreements about educational policy and practice are increasingly likely to be addressed in conflict over the institutions of educational governance rather than in open debates" (p. 254).

A limitation in Plank and Boyd's (1994) thinking resulting from a tendency to over-generalize human motives was identified in Chapter One. A problem that stands out throughout the historical record and the narratives is the question: Was the documented drop in community support caused by exclusion from the political process, or because of resistance to integration itself?

There is evidence from the narrative for support of either the "antipolitical" and the resistance to integration explanations. John Gerbrecht's (1999) comments on the effect of court involvement support an "antipolitical" explanation:

People are just not wanting to support them. If the school board could have kept it out of the courts. Once the judges came down and said do this, all of the schools are going to have this much Black and White. How are you going to do it? Oh lord, the money and the time that they spent on consultants coming in and partly because they didn't want to do it. They wanted someone from outside to come in and tell them, and usually they didn't know either. It's too hard.



Contrasting evidence is found from two comments from Dr. Hoover (1998). First, Hoover (1998) claimed: "We recognized that when this took place that there would be a significant portion of people who would not vote for a school tax because of the desegregation issue. I really believe that is still the case." Later, he (Hoover, 1998) stated: "(T)here are people who just cannot face the issue of desegregated schools."

The act of lumping motives in two categories labeled "antipolitical exclusion" and "resistance to integration" is to posit an artificial and over-simplified explanation of the richness of the narratives. Robert Aertker (1997), John Gerbrecht (1999), and Donald Hoover (1998) all talked about the growth in private schools in East Baton Rouge Parish following desegregation. Rossell's (1997, pp. 23-39) claim of "White flight" is supported. Clearly, when parents pay large amounts of money to send their children to private schools and the quality of their child's education is divested from the quality of public education, it might be expected that there will be a drop of support both in participation in local public schools and in tax support.

Given this, a consideration of "antipolitics" as an explanation for the drop in support of public education in East Baton Rouge must prompt inquiry into the causes of "White flight." Was "White flight" in East Baton Rouge a result of the "antipolitical" efforts of desegregation, or of the resulting desegregation policies implemented? Phrased another way, was "White flight" caused by the political process or the results of the political process?

The use of narrative is ill-suited to definitively answering this question. Nevertheless, narrative does provide argumentative support for a claim that "White

flight" was a reaction to the implementation of desegregation policy rather than the method through which the policy was developed. Reasons for "White flight" suggested in the narrative include parents not wanting their children to attend integrated schools (Haw, 1999a; Aertker, 1997; Hoover, 1998; Robinson 1999), parents not wishing their children bussed across town (Aertker, 1997; Gerbrecht, 1999), parents concerned about the safety of schools in African American neighborhoods (Gerbrecht, 1999), and parents seeking the best quality of education possible for their children (Aertker, 1997; Gerbrecht, 1999). These are explanations of parents acting in the perceived best interests of their children.

Evidence suggests that there is some support for the explanatory capacity of Plank and Boyd's "antipolitical" theory in the case of East Baton Rouge Parish School desegregation; however, notable limitations are also prominent. The conclusions regarding "antipolitical" theory also influence Rossell's thinking. Rossell and Hawley (1997, p. 6) suggest there is a current broad public acceptance of school integration and posits a belief that quality incentives are capable of achieving integration goals. An example of Rossell's solution could be a school located in an inner-city neighborhood provided with additional resources, staffed with the best administrators and teachers possible, and offering a quality educational program unavailable at any other school.

It is not suggested here that Rossell (1997) underestimates the complexities involved. It is acknowledged that Rossell's theory as described for the purposes of this work has been both generalized and simplified. Regardless, questions are raised through the narrative that indicate potential obstacles to the success of political

solutions of the type recommended by Rossell (1997). Although public opinion polls show a majority of citizens support school integration, there are likely many individuals, both White and Black, who do not want their children attending integrated schools. In addition, if parents perceive a location as being crime ridden, it is unlikely that they will send their children to school there. Also, the factor of distance for both parents and students will likely remain an issue in choosing a school.

This section began with Rossell's (1997) lamenting the limits of government and judicial policy in achieving public school integration. Certainly, there are limitations. Perhaps, there is no such thing as a "political solution" or a "political explanation" that encompasses the full meaning of any history. Derrida warned of "assuming a finally reassuring schema" (Derrida, 1995). Significantly, in the political theories examined, the role of cultural and social differences in the desegregation process was not a consideration. In contrast, cultural roles are the focus of anthropological theories.

### **Meaning Examined Through Anthropological Theory**

Prager, Longshore and Seeman (1986) argue that studies of school desegregation have failed to produce a full understanding of the problem because research has largely been guided by public issues and concerns. Thus, research has focused on the effects of desegregation without linking the effects to the underlying processes. Prager, et al. (1986) argue that "field theory" should be used to provide a view of the total situation.

Ogbu's (1986) work was examined in Chapter One as research that fits into the "field theory" designation. Ogbu (1986) argues for a "cultural-ecological" approach to research that would study desegregation from the participant's point of view. This

work has endeavored to consider participant views. Ogbu (1986) goes further, however, in the development of the concept of "folk epistemology." "Folk epistemology" is a people's perception of how society's social and economic systems work. In education, Ogbu believes, many minority members perceive public schools as institutions controlled by White people. Thus, minority students may be skeptical about dominant beliefs, values and attitudes fostered in the schools. Ogbu (1986) claims: "Specifically, it may make it difficult for the children to accept and internalize the schools' rules of behavior for achievement" (p. 39).

It was further argued in Chapter One that Delpit's (1995, pp. 172-175) "child-deficit belief" is an example of Ogbu's (1986) "cultural-ecological" perspective. Delpit (1995) believes that assumptions about minority children in schools often hinder educational practice. Examples of "child-deficit belief" include: a belief that minority children are less capable, ignorance of community norms, teacher failure to utilize rich home lives of students, and fear of recognition of racial difference.

When the historical record and the oral narratives resulting from this study are held up to these anthropologically oriented constructs, they fare well. A limitation brought up in Chapter One based on the failure of these theories to acknowledge individual and group differences within specific cultures is also evident from the narratives.

This work did respond to Prager, et al's (1986) emphasis on process and looking at the situation as a whole. A contradiction is revealed, however, because an understanding of process requires attention to the detail of specific people, events, or

policies resulting in a corresponding difficulty in generalizations for the whole. For example, there is much to learn in the specific narratives of Joyce Robinson (1999) or Freddie Millican (1999a, 1999b). However, it is impossible to conclude their thoughts are similar to all African Americans working in the East Baton Rouge Parish School System during the period of desegregation and the cross-over. It is only hoped that their narratives are reflective of typical members of their representative groups. There remains, however, important potential interpretive insights in these narratives.

Ogbu (1986) claims through his "cultural-ecological" perspective that minority members often view public education as an institution controlled by White people. Narrative from this research strongly supports this premise. If there were any doubt who was in charge of the school system in the minds of African American students at Baton Rouge High School following the death of Martin Luther King in 1968, Robert Aertker set them straight with the help of the local police department (Aertker, 1997). Mr. Aertker's (1997) entire interview reflects a district controlled by the White superintendent selected by a White school board. During the "grade-a-year" period from 1963-1966, Robert Aertker (1997) personally approved all of the African American students who were "allowed" to attend White schools.

In addition to the narrative of Robert Aertker (1997), an African American perspective is revealed through Freddie Millican (1999a, 1999b). Mr. Millican (1999a) said, "Some thought that they were robbing the Black schools of all of the excellent teachers." Doubtless, "they" refers to White decision makers. The issue is raised again

by Mr. Millican (1999b) when he discusses the plight of Black coaches transferring to White schools.

The second premise of Ogbu's (1986) "cultural-ecological" perspective is a concern that minority members are disenfranchised from public education as a result of White control. Both Freddie Millican (1999a, 1999b) and Joyce Robinson (1999) indicate strong personal support for public education. Both express a strong belief in the value of public education as a means for African Americans to overcome discrimination in society. There is little evidence of the disenfranchisement discussed by Ogbu (1986). It must be recognized, however, that both Mr. Millican and Ms. Robinson are career educators, and, as such, it is difficult to know how wide-spread their feelings about the value of education are throughout the African American community in Baton Rouge. In addition, Mr. Millican's concerns over the closing of African American schools in East Baton Rouge does suggest some disenfranchisement. Through the Black schools, many African Americans believed that they did have control over the education of young people in their community. Once this control was lost as a result of desegregation, there is a perception that students were lost. Millican (1999a) states:

We figured that we were doing a great job with them. Some kind of way, when integration came along, we lost them. That we lost them to the White teacher, and that some people say that is one of the reasons that some of our kids are going astray, because they don't have that caring and nurturing that we used to give them when we would have them in the Black schools. But, we talk about that. But then, there could be some truth to that.

Plainly, there is a perception among African Americans expressed by Freddie Millican that a different set of values was present in the Black schools. Ogbu (1986) suggests that it is difficult for minority students to acquire the beliefs, values and attitudes of a dominant culture.

There is also ample narrative in support of Delpit's (1995) "child-deficit belief." Helen Haw's (1998) description of African American students who would play "Uncle Tom" in an effort to take advantage of White teacher stereotypes is a poignant example. John Gerbrecht articulated a teaching philosophy of "taking the students where they are." In Mr. Gerbrecht's example, however, he emphasized his belief that minority children were not incapable, but rather had been deprived of quality teaching and musical training. In contrast, Millican (1999a) praised McKinley High School for the high expectations set for students and lamented the loss of this type of "nurturing and care" following desegregation.

Other elements of "child-deficit belief" are hinted at in the narrative. Difficulties of White teachers handling discipline in Black schools described by Joyce Robinson (1999) and Donald Hoover (1998) are explained as a result of cultural differences in child raising. This is an example of what Delpit (1995, p. 175) regards as ignorance of community norms. Helen Haw (1998, 1999) tells of a comfortable involvement in the home lives of her students; however, she also makes a claim that her frequent visits to students' homes were not the norm for White cross-over teachers. Delpit's (1995, pp. 175-176) claim that the rich home lives of African American students are not utilized

for educational purposes is supported by Haw's (1998, 1999) narrative. Home lives cannot be utilized until the teacher has knowledge of them.

It needs to be restated that the purpose in interpreting the narratives through these theoretical lenses is not to prove or disprove the theories. Rather, the two purposes are to consider the usefulness of the theories for elucidating the narrative and for revealing and discussing limitations in the theories as definitive schemas for explaining desegregation and the cross-over. It is true that sociological constructs related to "field theory" do have broad explanatory power when applied to the historical record, the narratives, and a consideration of the limits of the desegregation effort in East Baton Rouge Parish.

Ogbu's (1986) "cultural-ecological" claim of minority disenfranchisement resulting from White control and dominance is evident. Even the lawsuit itself and the court action are in the form of an African American appeal to a White controlled legal establishment for justice -- the same federal court system that had legally denied African Americans equal educational opportunity for almost sixty years prior to the Brown I & II decisions (Kluger, 1980). The federal courts were, however, a place to turn for justice. Following the Brown I & II decisions, actions of state and local political representatives demonstrated an almost total lack of political power on the part of African Americans. In Louisiana, the volume of anti-integration legislation passed during the early 1960's is remarkable (Read, 1970). Even more remarkable are the large voting margins with which the segregation statutes were passed. During the 5<sup>th</sup> Special Session of the Louisiana Legislature called by Governor Jimmy Davis to maintain



segregation in the state, the bill which led to the "packing" of the East Baton Rouge School Board passed the Louisiana House of Representatives by a vote of 79-14, and the Louisiana Senate by a vote of 26-9 ("Board Approved," 1961, p. 1A).

There is little doubt that Ogbu's (1986) claim of a lack of minority power has merit. On the other hand, there is some doubt revealed in this study about the level of African American estrangement from the public educational system. Freddie Millican (1999a, 1999b) and Joyce Robinson (1999) both revealed pride in the quality of Black schools in Baton Rouge prior to desegregation. Both narratives reflected community values with a high priority placed on education. African Americans have a history of support of local public schools in Baton Rouge. The number of African American students is continuing to rise in the district (Aertker, 1997). A limitation of Ogbu's (1986) theory presented in Chapter One questioned the tendency for group wide generalizations. From this research, it seems that Ogbu (1986) is highly descriptive of some African Americans; but, it also seems that he is not descriptive of all African Americans in East Baton Rouge Parish.

Delpit's (1995) "child-deficit belief" does not make sweeping generalizations in an attempt to explain African American thinking in a single theoretical frame. Delpit (1995) discusses problems many African American students have in public schools. As such, there was nothing in the historical record or the narrative contrary to her position. The argument would have to be that there was no "child-deficit belief" operating in the East Baton Rouge School District during desegregation. Clearly, there was "child-deficit belief" in the district; although exact forms and levels is debatable. Yet, this

theory was never intended as a broad explanation of desegregation. In fact, it has been applied to this research by the author outside of its original intention which was to develop better curriculum practices for minority students. To conclude this section it will be claimed that both "cultural-ecological" and "child-deficit belief" provide some explanation of what happened in Baton Rouge, particularly from the perspective of African Americans. There still remains, however, a need to explore additional facets of desegregation in East Baton Rouge Parish.

### **Meaning Examined Through Social Theory**

The social theory discussed in Chapter One is actually more of a method labeled "phenomenology" than a theory; however, as a method it is complete with underlying theoretical assumptions and constructs. Phenomenology is explored in Chapter One because of its use as a method of interpretation used in sociology to understand desegregation. Phenomenology attempts to focus on the perceived meaning of individual social action. Willie and Greenblatt (1981) pioneered the application of phenomenological methods to the study of desegregation. These studies emphasize the interaction between the schools and the community. The studies were macro in scope and did not focus on social interactions in the classroom.

Key to Willie and Greenblatt's (1981) argument for a different methodological approach to desegregation is the need, "for different conceptual approaches for the purposes of understanding the principles that govern interaction within human social systems" (pp. 19-20). The use of a variety of methods towards this end is encouraged. Willie and Greenblatt (1981) focus on "intentionality," a key element in the use of

phenomenology. "Intentionality" assumes that all social relations are rational and directed: therefore, all actions are guided by conscious or unconscious goals (Willie and Greenblatt, 1980, p. 20).

Previous desegregation studies using the phenomenological method have led to understandings of community resistance to change, anxiety over social arrangements, and self-preservation anxiety. The studies conducted using the method articulated by Willie and Greenblatt (1981) are strong in their ability to focus on individuals and their motives and intentions. These studies were criticized in Chapter One because each case study focused on individuals with influence and power in the decision making process.

This study desired to utilize some of the phenomenological method while modifying the focus to include the intentions of those individuals most effected by the process. The resulting focus on individual participants in East Baton Rouge found that the individual narratives tended to support the conclusions of other phenomenological studies of desegregation cited by Willie and Greenblatt (1981) as community resistance to change, anxiety over social arrangements, and self-preservation anxiety.

Narrative evidence supports this; however, it will be further suggested here that the narrative implies that the "intentionality" of educators may be different than that of policy makers. Using Donald Hoover's (1998) distinction between "desegregation" and "integration," it will be argued that many policy makers were working towards "desegregation," while many educators were working towards "integration." This approach implies new meanings for the concepts of community resistance to change, anxiety over social arrangements, and self-preservation anxiety. Specifically, the way

one acts upon these three intentions is determined by whether one is in a power role or a participant role.

A comparison and contrast of narratives collected from administrators (Aertker, 1997; Hoover, 1998) and cross-over teachers (Millican, 1999a, 1999b; Haw, 1998, 1999) illustrates a difference in intentions. Robert Aertker (1997) talked about meeting with Judge West and discussing the best method of achieving the desegregation expectations of the federal judiciary. Mr. Aertker faced all of the phenomenological elements in the community reported by Willie and Greenblatt (1981). The contextual study reported in Chapter Three of this work suggests that in Baton Rouge there was considerable community resistance to change. Much of Mr. Aertker's (1997) narrative describes how he responded to resistance both within and outside of the school system. The treatment of African American teachers by the administration following their 1970 cross-over transfer to Istrouma recounted by Freddie Millican (1999a) further supports the idea of community resistance to change. The message from administrators who referred to Black teachers as "new teachers," and harassed them for minor infractions was likely a thinly veiled expression of community resistance.

Donald Hoover's (1998) and Joyce Robinson's (1999) narrative concerning problems faced by White cross-over teachers reveals both anxiety over social arrangements and self-preservation anxiety. Specifically, Dr. Hoover's (1998) comments on teacher complaints about student behavior is an example of educator anxiety over social arrangements. Also, Ms. Robinson's (1999) recollection of White teachers coming and "looking over" Black schools illustrates self-preservation anxiety

on the part of these teachers. The purpose here is simply to support these ideas in general terms and to suggest that these concepts do explain some behavior. There is no ability here to make a claim concerning the overall levels of this thinking. Clearly, however, there existed during the desegregation process and the cross-over in East Baton Rouge many individuals who were either political decision makers external to the school system or personnel within the school system who recognized and accepted the inevitability of "desegregation" while making every effort to avoid "integration."

The narrative, however, reveals a different type of "intentionality." It appears that there were many individuals in the school system who genuinely believed in and worked for "integration." This is not to say that no individuals in a decision making capacity wanted "integration"; however, successful "integration" by its definition requires an intentional desire on the part of the participants. This type of desire is revealed throughout the narratives of Freddie Millican.(1999a, 1999b), Helen Haw (1998, 1999), Joyce Robinson (1999), and Donald Hoover (1998).

Mr. Millican (1999a) talked about the importance of integration to the African American community in Baton Rouge and said, "I don't know of anybody who looked back and said, 'We don't want to go.'" Ms. Haw (1998) told of cooperating with other teachers to "integrate" the teachers lounge at Capitol High School by moving the furniture around. The faculty was desegregated by court order; but, some teachers wanted something more. Ms. Haw worked for integration through her participation in extra-curricular activities, her frequent visits to the home's of students, and her efforts to

become socially involved with other teachers. Ms. Robinson (1999) in an eloquent passage that is worth repeating said about integration:

Integration comes with the individual, him or herself. You have to want to make that difference. You have to want to say that it can work. I will help to make it work. I am going to show where I am with this. If you haven't done that, I don't care how many creative little ideas you come up with, it doesn't work until the individual themselves want to make it work. That is important. It is all about self. When self is not into it, it's not going to work. I don't care what you say or what you do, it's not going to work. We have to commit, and I know that's not a word that I should use too often. But commitment is the key to all of this. It's the difference. No other way to put it.

Like the phenomenologists, Ms. Robinson stresses the importance of individual intentionality. Dr. Hoover (1998) also strongly emphasized the importance of integration when he explained the difference between desegregation and integration.

What emerges from this phenomenological examination of intentionality of the community and participants in East Baton Rouge Parish is a dual set of problems. The first is desegregation and the complex set of issues and diverse efforts to promote and resist it. The second is integration and the intentions of individuals seeking to diminish racial barriers and those wanting to strengthen racial barriers. The next section applying oral history to the problem flushes out these types of issues resulting in a cohesive set of conclusions and recommendations regarding desegregation and integration.

### **The Application of Oral History in Educational Research**

Three ideas pertaining to the application of oral history to educational research were discussed in Chapter Two. First, Scheurich and Young's (1997) "epistemological racism" was presented as a discussion of the problem of racial bias in research. Second,

Egea-Kuehne's (1996) argument against assuming or claiming neutrality in education was used to support the assumption of an subjective stance common to oral history methods and the rejection of neutral objectivity . Third, Popkewitz and Brennan's (1997) "social epistemology" was presented as a technique through which the meaning of desegregation might be examined from within a set of subjective assumptions.

Rather than using these theoretical ideas as explanatory models like the political, sociological and anthropological theories discussed in the previous section, these axioms will serve as a set of assumptions and guidelines from which to analyze the research question's answers.

### **Perceptions of East Baton Rouge School Personnel**

The first research question asks: What were the perceptions of school personnel regarding the process of desegregation and the massive 1970 cross-over? The historical record and the narratives collected are full of perceptions. The problem here is the interpretation and development of conclusions. By assuming non-neutrality, it is difficult to claim any conclusions based on the perceptions of others. Nevertheless, there is something to be learned from the narratives that requires presentation and explanation.

An initial area of interest regarding perceptions is the attitudes of East Baton Rouge school district personnel regarding desegregation itself. Clearly, attitudes were mixed and ranged from fully supportive to very much against. More is revealed about perceptions of the specific 1970 cross-over. Teachers were not given a choice because the teacher transfer plan developed by the biracial committee and approved by the

courts mandated an experienced-based method. Many teachers, however, were glad to cross-over. Mr. Millican (1999a) clearly stated that many African American teachers were grateful for the opportunity to cross-over because of what it meant for the overall civil rights struggle. Ms. Haw (1998) also indicated a desire to be part of the cross-over. On the other hand, all of the interviewees mentioned cross-over teachers who did not want to teach in a predominantly other race school.

Another conclusion about perceptions of the cross-over is that it was difficult for the teachers. Again, all of the interviewees discuss cross-over teacher problems in one form or another. In particular, the problem of language stands out as a dominant theme. During the cross-over teacher orientation at LSU prior to the 1970 school year, Dr. Butler, warned teachers not to "turn red," or "let your eyes pop out." The message for teachers was that they should not get upset over the unfamiliar use of language. In the schools, however, it was difficult for cross-over teachers to overlook racially charged language. It is easy to understand why teachers would resent being called "new teachers" by a principal just because they were Black.

The creation of cultural differences is legitimized through language. Often, the same language that separates groups marginalizes groups. This claim is not meant to be academic or technical. To put it simply, people know when language is being used to put them down (marginalize them). When such language is used, anger and resentment are logical results. In the professional environment cross-over teachers experienced at school, however, there was little acceptable release. Teachers were expected to ignore



the language and do their jobs. This alone indicates a difficult work environment for cross-over teachers.

The final relevant issues regarding the impressions of school personnel about desegregation and the crossover are the interviewees' current thoughts. Again, there is a wide range of thinking. All of the interviewees believed that desegregation had fallen far short of expectations. The interviewees all also believed that problems of desegregation remained in the district. One person, Helen Haw (1999) believed that little has been accomplished through desegregation efforts. The others, (Millican, 1999a, 1999b; Aertker, 1997; Robinson, 1999; Hoover, 1998) all said that desegregation in East Baton Rouge Parish had improved overall race relations in the city. All of the interviewees also expressed concern over the future of public schools in East Baton Rouge Parish; however, Mr. Millican (1999a, 1999b), Ms. Robinson (1999), and Dr. Hoover (1998) all discussed reasons for optimism. Shifting from a focus on impressions, the second research question addresses the issue of the impact of desegregation and the cross-over on instruction.

### **Impact of Desegregation and the 1970 Cross-Over on Learning and Teaching**

The second research question asks: How did the school system's culture react to the changes resulting from desegregation and the 1970 cross-over in terms of teaching and learning? Comments throughout the narratives provide many interesting answers to this question. Again, with the assumption of non-neutrality, there is no attempt here to generalize these answers to a broader context. It is asserted, however, that what is

claimed through this interpretation of narrative is reflective of types of situations and experiences faced by cross-over teachers in the classroom.

Dr. Hoover (1998) stated during his interview that following the 1970 cross-over there was no significant change in student achievement test scores in the East Baton Rouge School System. One reason for this may be that except for a few early retirements, the same teachers were teaching in the parish as the year before. Another possible reason is revealed through the narrative of Mr. Millican (1999a, 1999b). Mr. Millican described on several occasions the extra effort he and other African American cross-over teachers placed on the preparation and delivery of their lessons. The discussion by Mr. Millican (1999a) concerning the way the students would challenge him, his concern over using incorrect grammar on any written document, his telling about the teacher removed from the school for speaking incorrectly -- all indicate a situation where he perceived that the White community was monitoring everything he did. To use Mr. Millican's (1999a) own words, "There might be some truth to that." It is reasonable to assume that many African American teachers in predominantly White schools did perceive that they were being carefully watched; and, as a result, that they worked hard in an effort to prove themselves good teachers. What is not determinable from this study is the level of this perception among Black cross-over teachers or the overall amount of extra performance it motivated.

Changes in the cultures of predominantly Black schools following the arrival of White cross-over teachers appear to have been different. Ms. Haw (1998) discussed the lack of expectations of Black students resulting from preconceived notions on the part

of many White teachers. This practice was discussed and elaborated earlier in this chapter with the discussion of Delpit's (1995) "child deficit belief." Like the situation in the White schools, the level of "child deficit belief" existing among White cross-over teachers is impossible to determine from the methods of this study. Regardless, the explanation of White cross-over teacher attitudes articulated through Helen Haw's (1998) narrative is consistent with "child deficit belief."

Ms. Haw (1998, 1999) briefly raised other issues that may have, to some degree or another, influenced the classroom instruction of White cross-over teachers. Ms. Haw (1998) mentioned a high level of fear. Certainly, it is difficult to perform any job when one is afraid. A lack of commitment from White cross-over teachers to their school and their children is also a concern. Ms. Haw (1998) mentioned teachers "putting in their time" so that they could transfer to a White school in three years. Further, Ms. Haw (1998) stated that many cross-over teachers did not want to participate in any school activities beyond the normal eight o'clock to three o'clock school day. These type of attitudes may not have a direct impact on instruction; however, students are sensitive to a teacher's attitude and respond accordingly.

In hindsight, the second question is the most difficult to answer given the methods employed in this research. To definitively answer this type of question would require a different set of assumptions, including objectivity and neutrality. At a minimum it would require a much larger sample of cross-over teachers and standardized procedure for either quantitative or qualitative data analysis. Nevertheless, the above interpretations do provide some understanding of the types of changes in classroom

instruction that resulted from the cross-over. Further, there is enough support for these claims to suggest that policy decisions that change cultural relationships in school classrooms also impact instruction in those classrooms. The changes, however, are not necessarily negative or counterproductive to learning; although, in many cases, learning may be reduced. Several interviewees (Robinson, 1999; Millican, 1999a; Hoover, 1998) suggested that attitudes brought from home and the community had a key impact on what happened in the classroom. The next section looks at community attitudes.

### **Attitudes of the Baton Rouge Community Towards Desegregation and the 1970 Cross-Over**

The third research question asks: What were the attitudes in the community of Baton Rouge towards the desegregation process and the 1970 cross-over? The answer is that there is evidence of deeply embedded racial attitudes and stereotypes throughout the Baton Rouge community during the desegregation process from 1956-1970. Community attitudes about desegregation are inevitably related to attitudes about race. This is not intended to single out or to indict the people of Baton Rouge. It is likely that the same claim about racism could be made about any community during any time. The purpose of this section is to discuss these attitudes and stereotypes as they existed in Baton Rouge during the stated time.

Scheurich and Young's (1997) typology of racism is used to describe the different levels of racism evident from the study. According to Scheurich and Young, two levels of racism operate at the individual level. Overt racism describes negative actions of a racial nature which individuals do openly. Covert racism is similar; yet,

this form of racism involves discretion and the desire of the individual to act secretly.

Two additional forms of racism operate on an organizational level. Social racism describes social group actions that discriminate on the basis of race. Institutional racism describes institutional actions that discriminate on the basis of race. The fifth type of racism, civilizational racism, is racism that emerges from the deepest and most primary level of people. According to Scheurich and Young (1997), civilizational racism encompasses primary assumptions about reality, ways of knowing, and ways of valuing (ontology, epistemology, and axiology).

Scheurich and Young's (1997) description of civilizational racism suggests that on a broad level racism is embedded in the way and in what all people think. Given this, there is no attempt here to say that some individuals in Baton Rouge were more racist than others. Nor is there an attempt to say that racism on the part of any specific individual or group had a specific impact on the outcome of desegregation efforts in the city. It is suggested, however, that racism of all types impacted the desegregation process and the cross-over of 1970. After all, racism necessitated the situation and events in question.

In his comprehensive history of the Brown I & II decisions entitled Simple Justice (1980), Kluger documents the many forms of racism resulting in the existence of "dual" school systems throughout the South. The primary goal of the NAACP and other plaintiffs in school desegregation litigation, including the Davis lawsuit filed in Baton Rouge, was the provision of equal educational opportunity for all children regardless of race. The purpose of the entire endeavor was, and still is, the elimination of institutional

racism on the part of public schools throughout the United States. Thus, efforts to prevent desegregation of schools are necessarily forms of the practice of institutional racism.

Chapter Three chronicled much of the resistance to desegregation in East Baton Rouge Parish. There was some overt racism, involving remarks, comments, or threats made to teachers and students. Publicly, although thinly veiled, much of the activity was in the form of covert racism. For example, when the state legislature "packed" the East Baton Rouge School Board during a special session called by the governor for the announced purpose of "maintaining segregation," and five months later the four new board members all voted to remove the superintendent, those involved emphatically claimed that the superintendent's desire to maintain public schools through desegregation was not a factor in the removal. Almost every action taken in an official capacity during the desegregation period in opposition to the effort was a form of covert racism. When the actions became policies, institutional racism resulted.

There is no need here for the purposes of understanding community attitudes to rehash all of the examples of racism prevalent throughout the narratives. In short, the narratives support the claim of deeply embedded racial attitudes and stereotypes. The rest of this section seeks to explore this embeddedness in East Baton Rouge through the modifications of "civilizational racism" discussed in Chapter Two.

In Chapter Two, Scheurich and Young's (1997) call for an end to "epistemological racism" through the development and acceptance of new "race-based epistemologies" was rejected. The reason for this rejection was the problem of language

that, it was argued, makes it impossible to create non-western epistemologies defined through terms which derive their meaning from western culture and history. This argument was concluded with a claim that it needs to be recognized that the use of all language contains inherent bias. It might be said that the civilizational racism Scheurich and Young (1997) claim is expressed through "epistemological racism," may more accurately be described as being expressed through "linguistic racism." It was also pointed out that language is something individuals are "given." Language cannot be re-created. The discussion of civilizational racism ended with a call to reducing bias in knowledge while retaining the use of language to assess value, interpret meaning, and communicate knowledge.

Recognizing bias in language is necessary to reducing bias in language. From the perspective of civilizational racism, the question is: How is racial bias embedded in language? The narratives in this dissertation strongly support two claims. First, there is considerable bias evident in the use of language during the desegregation process. Second, the participants in the desegregation interviewed all were consciously aware of linguistic bias and discussed it as a problem without prompting. No interviewee was asked about language in any question or comment from the interviewer.

Clearly, when John Gerbrecht (1999) asked his student why she didn't want to be called "Brown," he did not intend to insult her -- it is not even known if it did insult her. The point is, there is a strong likelihood that the term "Brown" used as a racial label had a much different meaning for the teacher and the student. The same is true for the term "new teacher" applied to Black cross-over teachers by the principal at Istrouma.

The specific reason this term was chosen and the meaning intended by the speaker is unknowable; yet, the label "new teacher" contained strong emotional meaning that was racially laden for the teachers. In another context, what does it mean to an African American parent or student when the White superintendent responds to an application to attend the school near their house with: "I will decide, yea or nay" (Aertker, 1997). It is likely that such a parent or student would view such a remark as full of racial bias. The bias in language may be only present in specific contexts. From listening to the tapes, it is also evident that linguistic bias is expressed through voice. Ms. Haw (1998) responded to a question about the reaction of her family to her teaching at Capitol High School with the response: "You teach where?" By itself, this question is fairly neutral; however, when heard through Ms. Haw's voice, the racial bias being described by Ms. Haw is clear.

In summarizing the third question, there was a complete range of attitudes in the community from full support to full rejection of school desegregation and integration. A large majority of Whites apparently opposed desegregation at the beginning; however, as time passed a large group of Whites supporting desegregation emerged. The Black community in Baton Rouge appeared to fully support desegregation; yet, as the case unfolded, many reservations emerged. Through the entire period, however, the claim of deeply embedded racial attitudes and stereotypes remains prominent. What does this tell us about desegregation policy and continuing efforts to deal with problems of desegregation in Baton Rouge Public Schools and all public schools facing issues of multiracial diversity?



## **Conclusions**

Kluger (1980) describes the goal of public school desegregation prior to the Brown I & II decisions as the search for equal educational opportunity for all public school students. The goal of equal educational opportunity required an end to all discrimination on the basis of race in the provision of public educational services. The present research has chronicled the enormous efforts in Baton Rouge that have endeavored to achieve the goal of equal opportunity. The beginning of this study raised the question: What still needs to be learned about desegregation? Included in the answer was a caution against the development of a finally reassuring schema.

Rather than presenting a final word, the conclusion of the present research will add additional commentary and knowledge in the hope that it will inspire future research and lead to a new understanding of the desegregation problem. The present study suggests that issues of school desegregation and integration are much more complex than race alone. Many issues faced by cross-over teachers and other school personnel during the cross-over may more accurately be described as resulting from cultural difference and change rather than the types of racism described. There is evidence in the narrative (Haw, 1998, 1999; Hoover, 1998; Millican, 1999a, 1999b) that although Black and White people lived together in the same city of Baton Rouge, there was much each did not know about the other. Black and White people, during the cross-over of 1970 and throughout the efforts of school desegregation, lived in two different cultures; resulting in a unique set of challenges for teachers from both groups.

## **Themes**

For Black teachers, the efforts to integrate public schools should not be separated from historical efforts on the part of African Americans to achieve equal treatment and status in American society. A dominant theme in this struggle is the sense of personal sacrifice for a greater cause; a cause with rewards that would be far in the future (Kluger, 1980, pp. 27-50). A great sense of sacrifice and loss is clearly evident in the Black narratives (Millican, 1999a, 1999b; Robinson, 1999). Two type of loss are revealed: first, there is a loss of place; second, there is a loss of language and culture. The African American community lost many of its schools because of desegregation. Individuals like Freddie Millican lost their alma mater's. Black schools with fine reputations like McKinley High School were desegregated with their faculties disbursed throughout the parish. In addition, the Black cross-over teachers had to teach in an environment where they believed that their own language and culture was unacceptable. They were forced to give up their culture and pushed to adopt the dominant White cultures existing in their new schools.

For White cross-over teachers there was a different set of problems associated with the themes of fear at work and lack of support. Both Ms. Robinson (1999) and Ms. Haw (1998, 1999) discuss the high level of fear among White cross-over teachers. This was likely the result of fear of another culture resulting from lack of knowledge. In addition, Ms. Haw (1998, 1999) discussed at length the lack of support and the disapproval of desegregation from her own White community. The lack of support is in

contrast to the level of support from the Black community expressed by Mr. Millican (1999a, 1999b) and Ms. Robinson (1999).

In addition to the anomalous problems of Black and White cross-over teachers, there were also issues of dislocation faced by both groups. Both Black and White cross-over teachers were forced to live in distinct and different school and home cultures. Ms. Haw (1998, 1999) described this well when she spoke of the schizophrenic feeling of being a cross-over teacher. The schizophrenic feeling is similar to the issues between individual home life and social work life raised by Thompson (1988) and described in Chapter Two. The present work has shown how oral history is able to expose those complex tensions and focus on the relationship between individual and culture.

Much has been revealed about the relationship between individuals and the broader history of school desegregation in East Baton Rouge Parish Schools; however, the problem still remains of enhancing equality of opportunity and ending discrimination. Today, integration remains an unfinished struggle. School districts are addressing this problem through a well established knowledge base. This knowledge base, discussed in Chapter One, is well grounded in literature and research. For the purposes of this conclusion, it will be labeled "desegregation policy." "Desegregation policy" includes all of the efforts of the courts to achieve the above goals. It also includes all types of policies developed and implemented, including the elimination of forms of legal segregation, changes in school boundaries, bussing, choosing location for new school sites, establishing magnet and other incentive programs, desegregation of

faculties and staffs, equalization of monetary and material resources, and making overall improvements in educational programs.

These types of policies have all been used to achieve goals that nationally have broad-based political support (Rossell, 1997). Different districts have used different combinations of these types of policies with varying degrees of success. In the case of East Baton Rouge Parish it is clear from this study that something else is needed. Thus, it is recommended here that in addition to currently existing and always changing and evolving "desegregation policies," schools also develop and implement "integration policies."

This recommendation borrows from Dr. Hoover's (1998) definitions of these two terms. For purposes of this discussion, a "desegregated" room would be a room with a proportional number of Black and White people. In contrast, an "integrated" room would be one in which racial and cultural differences are acknowledged and even celebrated; however, race would not influence individual cooperation or the achievement of the purposes for being in the room in the first place. "Integration" is dependent on the values of the people in the room. "Integration" is a moral and ethical issue.

An "integration policy," therefore, would focus on the moral and ethical issues of desegregation. To this end, an "integration policy" could be divided into several components, including community relations, staff development, teacher support, and curriculum content. Community relation programs could be developed that link the values behind integration efforts to the goals and future aspirations of the community.

Staff development, among many possibilities, could emphasize the problem of racial bias in language. Students could be taught values of appreciation of cultural diversity consistent with broader social and community values.

Certainly, many school districts are making these types of efforts within a larger desegregation effort. The focus might be changed to more of a moral and ethical justification through an "integration policy." Uniquely, however, an "integration policy" could be used to address specific issues of teacher support that are rare in past and current efforts.

The narratives from the two cross-over teachers (Haw, 1998, 1999; Millican, 1999a, 1999b) provide insight to elaborate further in what might be included in an "integration policy" to support teachers. It was argued earlier that teaching in a multicultural classroom, particularly when the teacher is of a race different than most of the students, is difficult. Teachers in these types of classrooms have needs beyond the needs of teachers in less diverse environments.

The complexity of diverse classrooms suggests the need for specific training prior to entering the classroom and continuing while in the classroom. In addition, teachers in diverse classrooms will face unique, and because of their racial nature, emotionally laden problems. Teachers in these situations need and deserve high levels of support. An "integration policy" could outline procedures for support from administrators, central office staff, other teachers, and even the parents and community. In addition, an "integration policy" should establish clear and available channels of communication between teachers and other people involved with the classroom.

Problems should be exposed and discussed as soon as possible, especially when the problems are related to racial or cultural differences. It should be made clear that teachers are expected and required to raise these issues in an appropriate manner in an appropriate forum.

Again, the emphasis of an "integration policy" would be moral and ethical values. For those who say that such an emphasis on values is inappropriate for public schools, it could be pointed out that they are simply the same values that have resulted in all school desegregation efforts. Freddie Millican (1999a), John Gerbrecht (1999) and Donald Hoover (1998) all said they saw progress in race relations in East Baton Rouge resulting from desegregation. In addition, they all remarked that changes in society of the nature of integration require long periods of time. The historical record indicates they are correct in this assertion; however, it is hoped that the process can be accelerated through policy. Certainly, throughout the nation, desegregation policies have moved school districts toward equality of educational opportunity and integration. It is argued here that in addition to "desegregation policies" value driven "integration policies" will further the progress towards the goals of "desegregation" and "integration."

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28 Negro pupils accept transfers to White schools. (1963, August 24). The Morning Advocate, p. 2A.

28 Negro transferees registered. (1963, August 29). The Morning Advocate, 1A, 14A.

50 Negroes jailed as tear gas is used on crowd downtown. (1961, December 16). The Morning Advocate, 1A, 10A.

96 southern solons pledge try at reversal of integration edict. (1956, March 12). The Morning Advocate, 1A, 4A.

All students in 5 grades must register. (1965, July 21). The Morning Advocate, 1A.

Appeal made for school mixing peace. (1963, September 2). The Morning Advocate, 1A.

Ask ban against NAACP. (1956, March 2). The Morning Advocate, 1A, 8A

Attorneys seek school mixing decision delay. (1962, March 10). The Morning Advocate, 1A, 4A.

BR integration chief arrested before meeting. (1963, April 6). The Morning Advocate, 7A.

Board approved plan to 'pack' in senate 26-9. (1961, February 20). The Morning Advocate, 1A, 4A.

Board decides as expected to oust Funchess, (1961, June 9). The Morning Advocate, 1A, 10A.

Board member order readying of school plan. (1963, March 8). The Morning Advocate, 1A, 4A.

Board names Lindsey new school head, (1962, January 26). The Morning Advocate, 1A.

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Compliance request OK'd by board. (1965, June 2). The Morning Advocate, 1A, 12A.

Court blocks EBR school mixing plea. (1961, October 10). The Morning Advocate, 1A, 10A.

Court of appeals upholds integration order in EBR. (1961, February 10). The Morning Advocate, 1A, 10A.

Crowd jeers mixing try by Negroes. (1962, September 5). The Morning Advocate, 1A, 8A.

Davis calls 5<sup>th</sup> special session for Wednesday. (1961, February 11). The Morning Advocate, 1A, 8A.

Davis names four to serve on EBR board. (1961, February 21). The Morning Advocate, 1A, 4A.

Davis signs 10 special session bills into law. (1961, February 21). The Morning Advocate, 1A, 4A.

Delay is asked in suit seeking school mixing. (1962, March 14). The Morning Advocate, 1A.

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Federal judge orders EBR, St. Helena to desegregate public school systems. 1960, May 25). The Morning Advocate, 1A, 6A.

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Judge is studying CORE case. (1962, January 13), State Times, 1A, 5A.

Judge orders EBR school mix in Fall. (1963, July 18), The Morning Advocate, 1A, 14A.

Judge rules against CORE. (1962, January 4). State Times, 1A.

Judge sets conference in mix case. (1963, July 11). The Morning Advocate, 1A, 10A.

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Judge to file school mixing opinion soon. (1963, July 16). The Morning Advocate, 1A, 8A.

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Lindsey to assign Negroes to schools. (1963, August 9). The Morning Advocate, 1A, 8A.

Local NAACP head claims he'll sue board. (1962, September 1). The Morning Advocate, 1A, 8A.

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Motion to accept school mixing plan filed in court here. (1963, June 28). The Morning Advocate, 1A, 8A.

Move is afoot to get school head to quit. (1961, June 1). The Morning Advocate, 1A, 12A.

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### **Vita**

Douglas R. Davis received a bachelor of science degree in history from Southern Oregon State College in 1985. He later received a bachelors of science in Secondary Social Studies Education from Oregon State University in 1987. Douglas R. Davis taught high school social studies in the East Baton Rouge Parish School System from 1989-1995, and in the West Feliciana Parish School System from 1995-1997. In 1995, Douglas R. Davis received a masters of education degree in Educational Administration from Louisiana State University, and is currently a candidate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy which will be conferred in August of 1999.


# DOCTORAL EXAMINATION AND DISSERTATION REPORT

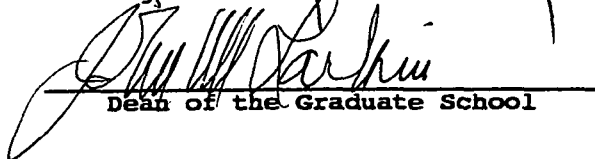
**Candidate:** Douglas Raymond Davis

**Major Field:** Educational Administration and Supervision

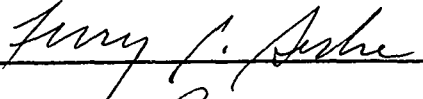
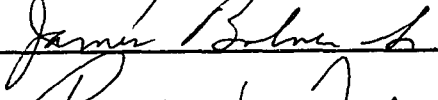
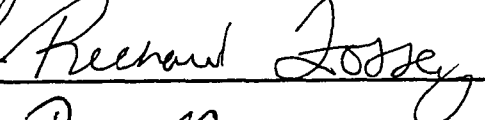

**Title of Dissertation:** Crossing Over: An Oral History of the  
Desegregation Experience of Public School  
Personnel in East Baton Rouge Parish Louisiana

**Approved:**

  
Major Professor and Chairman

  
Dean of the Graduate School

## EXAMINING COMMITTEE:

**Date of Examination:**

May 4, 1999